THE TRUTH OF THE APOSTLES' CREED

Translated by

CHARLES E. HAY, D.D.

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THE TRUTH OF THE APOSTLES' CREED

An Exposition by Twelve Theologians of Germany

EDITED BY WILLIAM LAIBLE, D.D.

TRANSLATED BY CHARLES E. HAY, D.D.

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TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE

Every assault upon the truth in the history of the Church has hitherto been overruled for its firmer establishment in the minds of men. The recent determined opposition to some portions of the Apostles' Creed in Germany has already furnished a further illustration of this historical phenomenon. The Church does wisely in gathering the results of every conflict and preserving them among her treasures. We in America have reason to rejoice in our freedom from many perplexities arising from the too intimate connection of Church and state. As the discussion of the Creed, in consequence, does not assume for us a legal aspect, we are in position to consider it simply upon its merits. Our danger is that we may, in the absence of direct opposition, fail to appreciate this form of sound words as we should. The same influences which in other lands give rise to questions of ecclesiastical order are only too actively at work among us in seeking insidiously to undermine the faith of our people in the old doctrines centering in the person and work of Christ as the divine Redeemer. It is most fortunate for us that the more open conflict there has called forth many notable defences—among them the remarkable series of articles here presented. The circulation of this little volume should not only serve to confirm many in the faith once delivered to the saints, but should enable them with clearer vision of the truth and with more fervor to unite with the saints of all ages in confessing that faith in the noble language of the Apostles' Creed.

CHARLES E. HAY.

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FOREWORD

In the summer of A.D. 1913, the editor of the *Allgemeine Evangelisch-Lutherische Kirchenzeitung,* addressed the following circular letter to twelve well-known theologians:

"The attacks upon the Apostles' Creed, the oldest confession of the Church, which still forms a bond of union for us even with Roman Catholic believers, have assumed so general and serious a character that great uneasiness has been occasioned in wide circles. There has been an impression that no scientific theologian could longer be found who would be willing or able to take a serious stand in its defence. These ideas are promulgated in our schools and universities, and earnest efforts are already being made to crowd it out of our church services, and thus out of the life of the Church at large. It is needless to say that a deadly blow would thus be struck at the very heart of our Christian populace. In this whole controversy we have to do, not with the form of the Creed, which, being human in origin, may always be open to discussion, but with the fundamental statements of faith here proclaimed, which many are unwilling longer to hear, teach or confess. As certainly as it is the purpose of the Lord to preserve His people true to His word and to the faith founded upon it, is it our duty to ward off this assault,—the duty of the strong to succor the weak; of the chosen witnesses to testify; of the leaders to guide with clear and ringing utterances. It requires no argument to prove that the chief responsibility here

rests upon the representatives of our scientific theology. All eyes are turned upon them from every side; their voices will be heard above all others; their testimony can and will again dispel the false impression that the Creed has become scientifically untenable. The world must be led to realize that the Church still has a theology which believes the Creed and is ready to confess its faith; and the membership of the Church, with its pastors and teachers, must also realize this and thus be filled with new and joyous confidence.

"I have, therefore, encouraged by the unexpectedly favorable experiences of the most recent years, and after most cheering conferences with theologians, made bold to approach a somewhat extended circle of our leading men and theologians with the request that they come to the help of the Church in the present emergency and employ the high talents which God has bestowed upon them in defence of the sacred ancient confession."

The response to this circular was the preparation of twelve articles, which were published in the *Kirchenzeitung* toward the close of the year 1913 and in the early part of 1914. They attracted such widespread attention and were received with such profound gratitude that there was a general desire to have them all published together. This has now been done, and the volume is herewith offered to the public, including a valuable historical introduction by Dr. Bonwetsch, which also appeared in the above-named periodical.

The book is thus a gift of theology to the Church—a gift of permanent value, inasmuch as it is evident that the conflict centering around the Creed will not be so quickly ended, and there will be abundant occasion to make use of these weapons from the arsenal of theology. It will, at the same time, constitute an enduring historical testi-

mony that, in these days of strenuous assaults upon the faith, the Church possessed a theology which stood loyally by her and could do so with entire scientific conscientiousness.

The book has been written and is published for the glory of God. May His blessing accompany it as it goes forth upon its mission to edify and establish His people in the faith.

THE EDITOR.

LEIPSIC, July, 1914.

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The Truth of the Apostles' Creed

CHAPTER I

What is the Creed to Us?

By Dr. N. Bonwetsch
PROFESSOR OF CHURCH HISTORY AT GOETTINGEN

What is the Creed to us? I am well aware that in attempting to answer this question I can say nothing new. But the calling to mind of that which we already know may promote clearness of judgment. As a church historian, I may be permitted to direct attention particularly to the history of the Apostles' Creed, although in doing so I can do no more than report the results of the labors of others. An appreciation of its history cannot be without influence upon our attitude toward it in the present, however much the significance of that history may have been obscured by our veneration for its antiquity and our familiarity with it from childhood.

It is well known that the Creed in its present form cannot be traced beyond the close of the fifth century. But it is equally well known that it presents to us a somewhat enlarged form of the same confession which meets us in a much earlier period in the most widely separated portions of the Church. The confessional formula of the Roman Church enjoyed especial authority. It read:

"I believe in God the Father, the Almighty, and in

Christ Jesus His only-begotten Son, our Lord, born of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary, crucified and buried under Pontius Pilate, on the third day risen from the dead, ascended to heaven, sitting at the right hand of the Father, thence He cometh to judge the living and the dead; and in (or 'in the') Holy Spirit, a holy Church, forgiveness of sins, resurrection of the flesh."

This Roman baptismal formula has been thought to be the root of the related confessions, even of those found in the Orient. It may, upon the contrary, according to my judgment, be positively affirmed that it originated in the Orient, although the precise and unchangeable form was not there so strictly preserved. Justin Martyr, who became a Christian at Ephesus about A.D. 130, commonly adds to "Jesus Christ," "crucified under Pontius Pilate," evidently because this has become familiar to him as a formula, and he mentions, as the customary formula of excommunication among the Christians of his day, "In the name of Jesus Christ, the Crucified under Pontius Pilate."* We find already in Ignatius, about A.D. 110-115, formulas firmly established which remind us most strongly of this baptismal symbol; for example, Smyrna 1: "Born of the Virgin, baptized by John, under Pontius Pilate and the tetrarch Herod bound to the cross according to the flesh, in order that He might by His resurrection set up a banner." Trall. 9: "Jesus Christ, of the tribe of David, truly born of Mary . . . truly persecuted under Pontius Pilate, truly crucified and dead . . . who (is) also truly risen from the dead." †

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* Compare Th. Zahn, "Das apostolische Symbolum," Erlangen and Leipsic, 1893, p. 33ff.

† Compare Magn. 11: "By His birth, sufferings and resurrection, occurring under the procurator Pontius Pilate." Eph. 18 : 2, and Polycarp, Phil. 2: "Who awakened our Lord Jesus Christ

That there is no indication of a Trinitarian arrangement of the formulas from which these words are taken does not cast any doubt upon their relation to a baptismal formula, as there was no occasion in the context for such an indication.

We cannot fail to recognize even in the writings of the New Testament references to such a confession.* 1 Tim. 6 : 12ff. presupposes a confession of Timothy "before many witnesses," which confessed that which Christ had already testified "before Pontius Pilate," and spoke of His second coming. 2 Tim. 2 : 8 also presupposes a formula which included the words, "of the seed of David" and "awakened from the dead"—a confession which was a response to the calling extended to him "before many witnesses." (2 Tim. 2 : 2.) The reference in 2 Tim. 4 : 1 to Him who "will come to judge the living and the dead," cannot but remind us also of the announcement made to Timothy of the content of the Christian proclamation. This confession, therefore, referred to Jesus Christ as well as to God, and confessed Him as "of the seed of David," as the One who stood "before Pontius Pilate," who was "awakened from the dead," and who will again "appear" "to judge the living and the dead." In 1 Cor. 15 :3-5, Paul reminds his readers of the content of his preaching: Christ died for our sins, was buried and rose again, and all this "according to the Scriptures." The reference to a confession would become most clear if in the second verse, instead of "with what word" I preached unto you,

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from the dead and gave Him glory and throne at His right hand."

* Compare Zahn, p. 39ff., and Von Zezschwitz, System der Katechetik II. 1. 80. Especially, A. Seeberg, Der Katechismus der Urchristenheit, Leipsic, 1903.

we should translate with A. Seeberg, "according to the rule" of that word which he had preached to his readers. But, in any case, the words of the apostle clearly declare that he gave to his congregations what had been already received by himself, hence what had been imparted to him already at his conversion to faith in Christ. He could have had occasion to express himself in this way only if he had in mind the handing down of a formula which had been full of significance for the entrance of his readers into Christian fellowship. Paul displays dependence upon existing formulas also when he declares that God sent His Son, born in the house of David, now sitting at the right hand of God. (Gal. 4 : 4; Rom. 8 : 3; 1 : 3; 8 : 34; Col. 3 : 1; Eph. 1 : 20.) Of fixed formulas, however, apart from the baptismal confession, we have no evidence in the apostolic period. Even the citations of scriptural testimony to Christ, then already taking traditional form, followed only a certain outline. The First Epistle of Peter apparently avails itself of existing formulas when it speaks of Christ as having died for sins, being exalted to the right hand of God, and coming to judge the living and the dead. (3 : 18, 22; 4 : 5.) I refrain from entering upon the question whether we are not to think of the confession made at baptism when the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews exhorts his readers, as those who have received the purifying baptism, to hold fast to the confession.*

Thus we are able to trace the beginnings of this formula of confession back to the original sources of Christianity.† The content of the Creed corresponds to

* In support of this view, see, especially, A. Seeberg, l. c., p. 142ff., and "Der Brief an die Hebräer," Leipsic, 1912, under Heb. 3 : 1; 4 : 14; 10 : 23.

† No doubt can be raised upon this point by the fact that it

the missionary preaching of the apostolic period, as we learn particularly from Luke: Jesus, of the house of David, slain and awakened in fulfillment of the Scriptures, revealed to the apostles as witnesses, exalted to the right hand of God, and appointed to be the Judge of living and dead. From the missionary activity and the scriptural proof upon which it relied arose the baptismal confession—its starting point being the confession of allegiance to Christ*—and by this was then regulated the further missionary preaching and the instruction of candidates for reception to the Church. This much may be affirmed, although more precise details as to the origin of the baptismal symbol may remain clouded in mystery. That the Trinitarian arrangement was also prevalent in the apostolic age is evident from 2 Cor. 13 : 13, and from the baptismal instructions in Matt. 28 : 19, although it was not from this arrangement that the confession originated.

In the East, the baptismal symbol did not acquire a fixed and unalterable form to such a degree as in the West, especially at Rome. But Irenæus, about A.D. 175, recognizes an identity of the baptismal confession in the entire Christian Church. It is one, as the sun is only one.† Yet it existed in different forms, for even in the West, outside of Rome, the principle, "unalterable and subject to no amendment," was not everywhere actually

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has been pronounced a lack of proper carefulness to infer from the present formulas the existence of a formulated baptismal confession (Harnack, Prot. Realenc. I. 751), and we have been warned not to attempt to trace the rule of faith back to the apostolic age (Kattenbusch).

*In support of this, see also J. Haussleiter, "Zur Vorgeschichte des apostolischen Glaubensbekenntnisses," Munich, 1893.

†Adv. Haer. I. 10.

observed. Our present Apostles' Creed is an enlarged recension. The additions which have been made to it have sprung from a desire to explain it, and have been meant as elucidations. Its home is the Church of Western Europe,* certainly not Rome. The occasional designation of it in our day as a Roman confession is therefore improper. Its form may be said to have been accidentally assumed. Among the additions are to be specially noted: "descended into hell" and "the communion of saints." In neither case is it known with certainty just what was the original meaning. The former, "descended into the realm of the dead," may be best understood as a confirmation of the actual death of Jesus, or as indicating that His redemption avails also for the dead and for us at our death. It probably found entrance into the present Creed from the baptismal formula of the congregation at Aquileia, through the elucidation of that formula published by a member of the congregation, Rufinus (about A.D. 400). It was understood by Rufinus himself as a strengthening of the term "buried." Whether by the "communion of saints" fellowship with the glorified saints above or participation in the Church's means of grace is to be understood, must remain an open question. The character of the original document is not altered by the additions. Zahn may, therefore, not be so far wrong when he asserts (p. 48): The tradition according to which the apostles, before the beginning of their missionary journeys, drew up the symbol which has been named after them, contains more historical truth and wisdom

* Kattenbusch, "Zur Würdigung des Apostolicums," Leipsic, 1892, p. 11: "Without any doubt, it arose from a church province of western Europe, apparently from the kingdom of France, and, as seems to me most probable, from a German diocese of that kingdom."

than the view that the Apostles' Creed is a production of the fifth or sixth century. Throughout the entire Middle Ages the Creed stood at the center of Christian instruction.* Whatever of Christian knowledge was in existence attached itself to this—and to the Lord's Prayer. Then Luther gave to the Church of the Reformation his wonderful explanation of it. Surely the Creed has a royal history to look back upon.

What are now the lessons of this history for us? First of all this—that in its essential parts it reaches back to the beginnings of Christianity—even in case we should deny that it was in its fundamental basis already the baptismal confession of the apostolic Church. It testifies that the confession of allegiance to Christ was the foundation of the Church from the very beginning. It is ecumenical, even though not in its present form; for even the so-called Nicene Creed is only a presentation of its original form enlarged by dogmatic definitions. A break with this confession, therefore, indicated a break with the whole history of the Church. But the changes which have been made in it should teach us to regard it, not as a formula in itself sacred, but as a living entity, and not to cling to each separate part, but apprehend it as a whole. Guided by its history, we will, therefore, place a different valuation upon that which belonged to it from the time of its origin and that which was added at a comparatively late day.

Its history teaches plainly that its germ consisted in its declarations concerning Christ, especially His death upon the cross and His resurrection, and that the original

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* Fr. Wiegand, "Das apostolische Symbol im Mittelalter," 1904; "Die Stellung des apostolischen Symbols im kirchlichen Leben des Mittelalters," Leipsic, 1903.

purpose of these utterances was, not to furnish holy mysteries to faith, but to announce what Jesus is and what proves Him to be the Christ of God.* Thus, also, its most ancient title, "The rule of truth" (Irenæus), characterizes it as embracing the apostolic proclamation concerning Christ, the living Truth. A careful observance of this, its genuine purpose, will make it very manifest that there is no contradiction between this and Luther's explanation.

But, after all, the real value of the Creed for us does not depend upon its history. The Reformation has taught us that even that which has a long history on its side must be surrendered if it obscures the truth of the Gospel. We are familiar also with the saying of the honored Church Father: "Jesus Christ called Himself the truth, not the custom. What is contrary to the truth is heresy, even though it be ancient custom." Indeed, it may be asked, first of all: Is it not for us, as sons of the Reformation, to decline to acknowledge any confession at all? Is not the binding force of a symbol in conflict with evangelical liberty? Faith is surely the most personal of all things. How can a confession of faith be the expression of the religious consciousness of all, even of those living in the most widely different ages? Further yet, is not the attempt to fix in definite forms of utter-

* Thus Kattenbusch, the most thorough living student of the history of the Creed, declares (l. c., p. 20) that the original text furnishes the "one thesis": "That we believe on Christ Jesus, who, as the Son of God, is our Lord, and it furnishes this thesis in such a way that it describes and explains in how far this is credible, in how far it is 'true,' and wherein Christ's disposition and attitude toward us reveal themselves." The symbol "is an expression of the conviction that we have our relation to God through Christ. It is thus, as a confession of *faith*, the expression of an inner decision for Christ."

ance itself in conflict with the directly personal nature of religious experience? How can contact with the infinite be formulated in finite terms?

Yet it is precisely evangelical faith with which confession is by its very nature most intimately associated. Evangelical Christianity is *personal* fellowship with God, and, therefore, evangelical faith is confidence in the gracious disposition of God. But such confidence is founded upon the assurance of the loving will of God given in the Gospel, and the confession is faith's response to the Gospel. It is not the sense of his nothingness which the evangelical believer recognizes as separating from God, but it is his guilt. The restoration of his fellowship with God is accomplished, therefore, by God's proclamation of grace as over against this guilt. Evangelical faith acknowledges itself as conquered by the revelation of the wonderful love of God for sinners and thus won to trust in Him, and gives utterance to that which has become for it the most profound heart-experience, in order at the same time to bring to others the same comfort of God's grace. Thus confession cannot be separated from evangelical faith. Other religions and churches operate through mysterious rites and ceremonies, which are designed to induce frames of mind, to awaken indefinable sensations. The Evangelical Church plants itself upon the Word, just because it has really apprehended Christianity as being what it is, i.e., personal fellowship with God; for fellowship of person with person arises only through evidence of the inner disposition manifested in word, as Luther express it in his profound reformatory work, "Of the Babylonian Captivity": "God has never dealt with men, and does not now deal with them, in any other way than through a word of promise. We, on the other hand, can never deal with God in any other way

than through faith in His word of promise." But the Confession is nothing else but an expression of this faith which the Spirit of God has awakened by His testimony.

It lies, therefore, in the very nature of the Lutheran Church especially to be a confessing Church. It was from the very beginning the Church of the pure doctrine. This has never been understood in the sense of the Catholic churches, in which the orthodox dogma, as the possession of a knowledge concerning God and redemption, guarantees salvation and opens the pathway to salvation, and in which by it, as the doctrinal law, obedience is tested. On the other hand, the Evangelical Church in its confession is concerned only that the Gospel of the grace of God be preserved undistorted and unlimited. If Luther himself so positively declined fellowship with the Swiss, it was not from fanatical orthodoxy nor stubbornness, but because he sought to prevent any obscuring of Christ as the true Saviour. For him the saying of Paul, "That life which I now live in the flesh I live in faith, the faith which is in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me," had again been fully realized. He is resolved, therefore, to know nothing of any other God than of Him who has in Christ poured out His whole heart toward us. Thus faith, according to Luther, can do nothing else than confess Christ.

But has the Creed in itself the characteristics of such a confession of Evangelical faith? Is it a grateful utterance of faith in salvation by Christ from sin and guilt, in reception by Christ to His fellowship and preservation and perfecting therein? This is the question of real importance for us to-day.

It has been said that we miss in the Creed very much which belongs to a proper confession of faith. It has been pointed out that it says nothing about our redemp-

tion and the merit of Christ, about justification and the way of salvation, nothing about the nature of God and the person of Christ, about the universality of grace, about sin and conversion, regeneration and good works, about the word and sacraments and their salutary use. But we are not at liberty to force into the Creed that which is foreign to its purpose. The very character of these objections shows that they have not been raised by any modern theologian. They are really to be traced to Abraham Calovius, the most orthodox of the orthodox (1655). He was led to offer them when resisting the attempt to reduce the content of Christian faith by exalting the authority of the Creed.* What Calovius asserts of the Creed is really that it is not a compendium of Lutheran dogmatics. To-day, offence is taken at its utterances concerning Christ, because, although not dogmatic, they are yet found altogether too dogmatic. The shifting grounds of this criticism should warn us not to allow ourselves to be imposed upon by it. But it should also remind us that the Creed dare never be for us merely an external authority of a legal nature, and that it is not of value for us simply on its own account, but through its testimony to Christ and the salvation which is in Him.

It follows, from what has been said, that we should treat of the Creed *as a whole,* if we are to realize what it is for us.† But, thus considered, it is a confession of allegiance to the One living God, who has revealed Himself to us in Jesus Christ, and who through His Spirit enables

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* At a later day, as is well known, Lessing assigned to the Creed, as having been delivered to the apostles by Christ Himself, a higher authority than that of the Scriptures. Grundtvig, also, upon other grounds, exalted it above the Scriptures.

† Kunze has recently very properly emphasized this in his ex-

us to appropriate Him. It contains nothing of theology, and says nothing about *us,* except that we believe in God through Christ. On the contrary, the deeds of God in Christ for us and upon us make up its content. The significance of the Reformation consists precisely in its clear enunciation of the fact that we attain to union with God, not at all by any way of self-deliverance, merely instructed in that which is good and imitating the wonderful example of Jesus; but because God reveals Himself in Christ as the only Mediator of our salvation, thereby awakening in our hearts, filled with fear and distrust, the confidence of faith, and thus bringing us into fellowship with Himself. God, *our* God through Christ our Saviour —this is what Luther recognized as the content of the Creed. In accordance with this, he assigns to it its place in his catechism: Teach the Ten Commandments, "what we must do"; then the Creed, "what God does for us and gives us." Luther sees in the Creed a plain summary of scriptural truth. He calls it the "Children's Creed," since it is "even for children and the simple, easy to learn." As is well known, he himself included it in his prayers for his own edification, and advised his friends before beginning their prayers to first preach to themselves the grace of God through the Creed. According to him, we learn from it that we are God's creatures and workmanship—yes, His children, who shall live with our Father forever. If we were lost through sin, yet God's Son, Jesus Christ, "out of pure love to us," "redeemed and bought me, until He shall bring me to eternal life." But through His Spirit He enables me to "feel

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cellent work, designed for general distribution, "Das apostolische Glaubensbekenntniss ein unveräusserliches Gut der evangelischen Kirche." Berlin, 1913.

creation and redemption in my heart." He "writes it inwardly upon the heart." Hence his summary of this confession: "That we may know and believe that we are Christians and delivered from eternal death, sins, and the power of the devil and the jaws of hell," because "Christ became man, died and rose again for me."* Therefore, "whoever does not find and lay hold of God in Christ, he shall out of Christ never and nowhere have or find God, even though he travel above the heavens, beneath hell, beyond the world." † It is the same truth which Luther never tires of repeating ever anew, that "outside of God, who is a Father of our Lord Jesus," we should "seek and honor no other God"; for in Christ "God depicts to us just exactly how He is disposed toward us." It is precisely in this intensive conception of the person of Christ that we find the evangelical basis of Luther's view. That *God is here for us* and that *I have God for my God,* of this we become conscious, according to Luther, in Christ. From this it follows, as a matter of course, that in confessing the Creed it must always mean for us, "in *our* suffering, *our* dead, *our* risen (Lord); that it is all ours and avails for us."‡ But who among those who hold fast to the Creed has failed to understand that not knowledge of any kind, and not an acceptance of facts as true, unites us with God, but only the trust in Him as our God wrought by God's concrete testimony in Christ. It is not our view that one "must have already confessed acceptance of the thesis concerning the divinity of Christ, before we find in Christ the Redeemer." We do not urge anyone that "he shall acknowledge the statements of the

* Auslegung des christlichen Glaubens, gehalten, 1537, zu Schmalkalden, Erl. A. 23, p. 239ff.

† "Die drei Symbola," ib. p. 259.

‡ Ib. A. 23, p. 237.

Creed, in order that he may thereby secure the basis for Christian faith."* On the contrary, we are very much more concerned that we "through Christ" have the confidence toward God which overcomes sin and death. The Creed is not to make the attainment of a definite height of religious knowledge the condition of Christianity, but in its short declarations we find expressed so clearly and definitely "why the person of Jesus, and it alone, furnishes the foundation of our faith."† *The revelation of God in Christ the foundation of our salvation,*—this is for us the content of the Creed, and this agrees, as we have seen, with the original understanding of it.

But should there not also be room in our Evangelical Lutheran Church for other forms of confession besides the Apostles' Creed? Who would deny this? There is already a great difference of usage in this particular among the various territorial churches which nevertheless recognize one another as confessionally most closely united. To bind exclusively to any definite form of confession would be entirely contrary to the spirit of Protestantism. In confirmation and ordination, as well as in the stated services of the Church, another form of confession might fittingly set forth our salvation through Christ. We love the Apostles' Creed on account of its history extending back to the beginnings of Christianity, and because it speaks so clearly and plainly of all that by which Christ has shown and still shows Himself to be our Lord, of His Spirit and the Spirit's gifts in the present and the future; but why should our confident trust in God through

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* This is Herrmann's view: "Worum handelt es sich in dem Streit um das Apostolicum?" Leipsic, 1893, p. 12ff., 18.

† Ib. pp. 27, 29.

Christ not find expression also in other words? In this view, there can be no objection to parallel formulas. When, as an expression of the same faith, the attainment of fellowship with God through Christ is confessed in the same way, this may be done in very different words. We do not recognize the binding obligation to the formula which is characteristic of Catholic Christianity. Only then—but then very positively—are parallel formulas excluded, when, upon the ground of a consciousness of variance in the faith, the substitution of another confession for the Apostles' Creed is desired. In the case of any such substantial, profound antagonism, the proposal of parallel formularies would be an obscuration, and their approval by friends of the Creed a surrender, of that which they have acknowledged as sure evangelical truth, inasmuch as they would thus cast the reproach of uncertainty upon it.

Certainly no one would question the statement that the present demand for the abolition of the requirement of subscription to the Creed rests, for the most part, upon objections to its content. Hence no one can join in this demand who regards the Creed as a confession of faith in the redemptive works of God. Such will not, of course, at any time be without consideration for the conscientious scruples which may be entertained by any against the Creed. They will rather maintain that it exists not for the burdening, but for the comfort and strengthening of the conscience; that it does not demand a meritorious subjection to separate statements of belief, but seeks to beget a joyous confidence in the crucified and risen Son of God, as Luther expresses it in his explanation: "That Jesus Christ is my Lord, who has redeemed me with His blood." It is not to a scholastic formula that the Creed seeks to bind us, but to the person

of Jesus, as to our true Saviour, and through Him to God.

But for any denial of this firm establishment of our faith upon Christ there is no room in the Church of the pure Gospel. Being essentially a confessional Church, it cannot at the same time accord any rights within its bounds to the rejection or ignoring of its Confession. He to whom the Creed is his personal assent to the testimony of the Gospel, and to whom the content of his faith is certain truth, cannot likewise acknowledge as truth an opposing confession springing from another faith. To make concessions here would be unfaithfulness and sinning against known truth. It is not a question here of theological differences, but of differences of faith—a question of the conscience bound by the word of God. To introduce the Creed with a modifying formula would no less imply a hesitancy to acknowledge it as the certain truth. It would, furthermore, as a subterfuge, be an offence against honesty. That which has become to the Church doubtful, she dare no longer confess.

To employ any kind of compulsion in matters of conscience would indeed be entirely contrary to evangelical principles. But the opponents of the Creed feel themselves burdened by the requirement of subscription to it, just as well as the conscience of those who accept it forbids them to consent to its abandonment. Would it not be the proper course, under these circumstances, to cease the attempt to reconcile the irreconcilable? Two religions stand to-day opposed to one another in our midst. Both claim to hold to Jesus; the one because by Him they have been taught of their relationship to God and aroused to seek its realization; the other because He is the personal and eternal Mediator of their fellowship with God. Should they not, in sincere love of liberty for themselves

and for one another, separate in peace, each with an independent church polity—perhaps, for the present, still joined in an alliance? According to their present legally-established church order, the Evangelical churches of Germany are confessional churches. It does not seem to me to be impossible to reach an understanding with such opponents of the Creed as have an appreciation of that which is historically and legally established. If those who stand upon the basis of this legally established right would by the above plan have indeed to surrender many legal rights, this would only be done in order that by the subsequent voluntary adoption of the obligatory subscription among themselves they might secure instruction in harmony with the Creed in preaching, parochial schools, catechisation and pastoral oversight. The other party would thus be released from an obligation inconsistent with sincere honesty upon their part. But I merely suggest this method which appears to me to be indicated as feasible in the present situation in the Church, as alone meeting the requirements of conscientious convictions upon both sides. For, in confessional questions, conscience alone must decide, not any considerations of Church polity.

Not long since, I received, as did others among us, an inquiry from America whether it would not be advisable, in the truest interest of the Church, to be satisfied with that which Abraham Lincoln once advocated: Instead of all confessions of faith, to write upon the altar of the Church as the only condition of membership, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and thy neighbor as thyself." Who would not with his whole heart agree that this is in reality all that is required? But it is the misery of our sad daily experience that there is no love to God in our hearts, but fear of God and love of

self—that we have no fountain of love within us. There is only one source of true love, the love of God, which reveals itself in Christ. "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins." "God is love"—this has been made manifest in Christ. Its manifestation is the great event in the history of religion. The Creed confesses our belief of this, and, therefore, we cannot surrender it. It testifies to Christ, the crucified and risen One, as our only salvation. Such a valuation of a religious reality cannot indeed be made to harmonize with the relativity which alone science is willing to recognize. But the peculiar mission of religion is deliverance from that which is relative and the uniting of man with the eternal God. This I find only in Christ our Lord. "He that hath the Son hath the life; he that hath not the Son of God hath not the life."

CHAPTER II

I Believe in God, the Almighty Father

By Dr. T. Kaftan
GENERAL SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHLESWIG

"I believe in God, the almighty Father"—thus begins the Confession of which it may be said with real and profound truthfulness that it has been, is, and shall remain till the end of time, the common Creed of Christendom.

Narrow-spirited pedantry, indeed, is not slow to remind us that this confession appears historically in various forms; that in its present form it dates from the fifth century; and that the Oriental Church does not state its faith in precisely this language. This is all more or less true. But what does it signify? Even the Lord's Prayer has not been handed down to us in an unchangeable form; yet, despite this fact, it has been, is, and will remain as long as Christians pray, the prayer of Christendom. If this be true of the prayer which the Lord gave us, how much more of the confession which springs from human hearts as an echo of the Gospel? The forms may vary, but the germ and contents are the same. The outcry of a petty pedantry may impress those who are slaves to the letter, but cannot affect those who, having attained to the liberty of the children of God, although still valuing the letter as an indispensable form, *live* by the spirit. That this Creed not only has been, but is the confession of Christendom, is evidenced by the unanimous up-

rising of the Church, i.e., the believing, Christ-confessing Church of to-day, in its behalf against the assault of those who "went out from us, but were not of us." And what it has been and is, that will it remain. This is a conviction, not of the intellect, but of faith; but it is a conviction of faith which has great certainty, for it involves nothing less than the entire basis of faith in Christ.

"I believe in God, the almighty Father,"—so runs the Creed, according to the original text, though not as it meets us everywhere to-day in our catechisms, in which the word "almighty" is construed as a second substantive, or is even attached to the words, "Creator of heaven and earth," a fully-justified but later clause of the Creed. That this was the original form may be inferred beyond all doubt from the Creed itself. For when, in the second article, reference is made to the first article in the clause, "sitting at the right hand of God the almighty Father," this same form faces us undisputed and indisputable. That I lay such emphasis upon this is not a haggling over the letter. Only by observing this difference can we preserve the full truth which the Church has confessed and still confesses—as will, I trust, be evident from the further discussion.

Trustworthy scholars have emphasized yet another point as a result of careful historical study of the text of the Creed. They assure us that it originally began: "I believe in ONE God, the almighty Father." It is not improbable that they are correct, but a decision of the matter could be reached only by a full discussion of the history of the text, which would here be out of place. The entire question is of no particular importance, and, at all events, without significance for the present, since it is well known that the Church abandoned this intoning of the ONE at least fifteen hundred years ago. We can understand that

the Church, which had come in part from the heathen world and was professing its faith before the surrounding heathen, should lay strong emphasis upon the truth that God is ONE God. But we can understand equally well that she should at a later day drop this emphasis when a multiplicity of Gods was no longer thought of. To lay stress upon the unity of God to-day would be to emphasize what is self-evident to all.

"I believe in God, the almighty Father"—this utterance of faith, with which the common Creed of Christendom begins, contains in a certain sense the entire Creed. Our ancient-church and universal-Christian confession of faith—and this is a fact which must always be maintained against all attempts to dismember it—is in its three articles a thoroughly harmonious confession. Those who, in order to foist upon our people another than the ancient Christian faith, are endeavoring to make the Apostles' Creed distasteful to our Evangelical masses, not only cut it up into three or four confessions, but so mutilate it as to inquire whether the assertion that Christ was "buried" is really an object of Christian faith. Blind leaders of the blind! They themselves do not perceive that the statements in this confession have no reference at all to facts, but to persons, and that everything which comes into view as a fact is more or less merely a characterization of a person. They do not perceive that this entire Confession in its three articles is nothing more nor less than a confession of allegiance of the human soul to the God of revelation; i.e., to the living God. But this, the living God, is called Father, Son and Spirit. Father, Son and Spirit are not three Gods, but one. As the Son is not without the Father, so the Father is not without the Son, and both are one in the Spirit. Or, to speak from our viewpoint, we do not have the Father without the Son,

and this Father in the Son we do not know without the Spirit. Again, it is a petty pedantry when it is said: Oh, yes, the first article a reasonable man may readily accept. Christians share this first article in its essential import with Jews and Mohammedans—yes, say some, with all people of sound understanding. But this is sheer folly, the most incredible stupidity. The whole conception in the Creed is a profound and inseparable unity. He who does not know the Spirit, knows not the Son; he who has not the Son, has not the Father. There is a great and a profound truth in the declaration above made, that the utterance of faith with which the Creed opens contains in a certain sense the whole Creed.

"I believe in God, the almighty Father"—this is an utterance in the depths of simplicity and upon the heights of wisdom and knowledge. It is a sublime declaration.

"I believe"—we say it with a full and clear realization of that which the word affirms. What is here confessed as the content of faith is not an object of intellectual perception. The latter cannot extend its vision to that which is here confessed. It creeps about in the lowlands of that which we perceive by the senses and can include in the categories of the understanding. But that which is here confessed stretches out as far above this as the heavens are higher than the earth. There, all is piecework. Here, we grasp a whole,—in the last analysis, the Whole. What is here confessed is a content of faith, not a fruit of speculation. The speculation of men is a reaching out in an attempt to grasp; it is a touching, not a grasping; only too often a losing of one's self in the incomprehensible, a weaving together of ribbons of mist. But here we lay hold upon that which is firmer than rock. We grasp in this Creed the reality of all realities. An apprehension, a laying hold of this, is faith—*the*

faith which is born from the everlasting depths of revelation.

"I believe in God, the almighty Father"—the emphasis lies upon the "almighty Father." What is God? "God" is everything, and "God" is an empty form. God is all, if He is thought of in His living essence and reality; but we then include in the conception all that we Christians confess of Him when we call Him the almighty Father. The word "God" is in itself a form, whose content needs to be furnished from without. God, says worldly wisdom, is the Absolute: God, say the Scriptures, is the First and the Last. Yes, in some way we all have a conception of God—all of us, that is, who live not as higher beasts but as men, as creatures who think, who give serious attention to the things about them, to themselves, and to the realities of existence. There must certainly somehow be a Last—something which exists of itself, and out of which all things spring—something that bears up all things and is in some way a finality. Thus reason not only those who conceive of God in His reality, His living essence, His presence; but also those who think of some kind of a hidden Being behind the clouds, who at one time called the world into being and wound up the world-clock, allowing it now to run down according to its own unalterable laws. Thus reason also those who do not look above the clouds, whose vision ends with the boundaries of the world, who know nothing but the world, whose God is the world itself as a self-existent, boundless, self-developing entity. Thus reason, still further, those who understand this entity as merely Nature, who, themselves spirit-forsaken, have no conception of spirit and see in the universe only manifestations of matter—whose God is matter.

Thus is the word "God" a form, whose content must

be furnished from without. It is Christianity which fills this form with incomparable content, with a content full of truth and full of life, with the content which it derives from the revelation of the Only One, when, firmly holding the truth amid the confusion of religions, it simply and grandly confesses among the nations of the world: I believe in God, the almighty Father.

The almighty Father—that is what God is. Let us endeavor—although in the insufficiency of our human powers, yet as clearly as we can—to set forth the truth which is embraced in the fullness of this confession.

If God is the almighty Father, this undoubtedly involves, first of all, that He is Personality—not Nature, but more than Nature; that He is Spirit—not the world-spirit, but the Spirit of the world, the personal Spirit who, although interpenetrating the world and bearing it within Himself, yet reaches far out beyond everything which the world contains.

Personality—we are well aware of the limitations which the thought involves. We know personality only as manifested in human character. But everything human is limited. If we are to think of God as a Personality, the conception of personality must be stripped of its limitations and its relativity. We human beings as personalities are not bound to time—we live not only in the present, but also in the past and the future; we are not bound to space—we traverse in spirit the known world. Yet we are not independent of time nor of space. But God is thus independent. He it is who exists from eternity to eternity, before whom a thousand years are as a day that is past, who, therefore, remains as He is. He it is whom the heaven of heavens cannot contain—both the God who is near and the God who is afar off. We conceive of ourselves as personalities only when we think

of ourselves as individuals in contrast with other individuals. God is not an individual in contrast with others —all things exist in Him. He is, as a theologian of our day has expressed it, "The harmonious Allness of spiritual personal life." God is Personality, but—mark well —divine Personality, a Power of self-contained thought and will.

And this Personality is *the* Power. This is involved in the attribute which we ascribe to the Father when we confess Him as the Almighty. What do we mean when we declare that He is the Power? We mean that He is the Source and Lord of all the Existence which surrounds us and of which we ourselves are a part and as a drop in the ocean. God is not this Existence itself, nor the sum of all the forces and laws in this commingling of nature and spirit. He is the living foundation of all this. Of Him and by Him are all things; all things are in Him. But they are not in Him as in a natural foundation. God is spiritual, i.e., the conscious controlling foundation of all things. It is He who from eternity to eternity calls into existence whatever appears, in order that His purposes may be accomplished. As the world is His handiwork, and He the source of all life, so also is that which we call history the realization of His will. The historical life of the human race which fills the centuries is a texture woven by free personal forces, yet a texture amid whose countless threads He casts the woof, Himself the Master-weaver at the loom of time.

In this way, God has absolute control over all things that exist and that come into being, the small as well as the great. We are to understand it literally when the Lord Jesus declares that without Him no sparrow falls to the ground. And as the One who has thus absolute control of all things that exist and come into being, He is

the living God, the God who doeth wonders. Our God is in the heavens; He can do whatsoever He will. All working forces are His, and His are all the regulations in accordance with which they work. His greatness is manifest in the fact that He is a God of order, of *an* order, if we choose so to designate it, a conformity to law which is seen in the greatest and the smallest things, in the drop in the bucket as well as in the boundless expanse of space in which the stars revolve.

But this fixed order of nature is not the final goal of His purposes. The world is not an end in itself, but the theater upon which are wrought out His designs, designs which are of spiritual and eternal character. All His control and regulated government of created things is absolutely conditioned by these His final designs. Where these require it, He compels the forces of nature to act in a way quite different from that which we observe in their ordinary course. He performs deeds which are manifestly His deeds, because they are intended to be such; deeds of power, which we call miracles. But He Himself is precisely the same when performing these wonders of power as in those works which we, in the limitations of our knowledge, are accustomed to designate His regular and ordinary works. In both alike He works. Whatever comes to pass, whether it be a so-called miracle or a so-called work of nature, He is always the final and efficient source. If He withdraws His breath, the universe is no more. This is what we mean when we say that God is power, absolute Power.

And this God, who is Power, who as the Almighty is the Omnipresent, and as the Omnipresent the Omniscient, and as the All-controlling the All-wise—this Almighty One is the Father. When we confess God as the Almighty, the eye of our faith penetrates to the length and

the breadth, the heights and the depths of the universe. But when we stammeringly call Him Father, we gaze into the profoundest depths. This is the stupendous, incomprehensible fact, that eternal Power has, in that Jesus who was Christ, revealed itself as our Father. Here gushes forth a stream from the depths of eternity—here beams upon us the Light that is the life of the world.

The Father—our Father—we draw upon the realm of the familiar in our human life in order to express in regard to the Incomprehensible One the loftiest and the most profound experience which we may have of Him and in Him. We call Him Father to whom we trace our origin. But this is an external idea. It has been anticipated even by those who are accustomed to speak of the All-Father. When we speak of a fellow-man as paternal, we mean to say that he exercises watchful care, that he guides and leads safely on the way of life. But this does not exhaust the meaning of the word. The Psalmist already speaks of God as one who pitieth those who fear Him as a father pitieth his children. The most profound and final idea involved when we confess the Power as "The Father," is expressed in the New Testament declaration, "God is Love." If personal life is the highest form of life, life itself—the loftiest and profoundest life—is Love. God is Love—holy, eternal Love. This is what we confess when we call God Father.

But again—what love is we know primarily and directly only through our fellowship with men. We make bold to attribute to God this loftiest human emotion; but here, too, we must remember that it is God of whom we speak. We must eliminate, therefore, everything which in the love of men is too distinctly human. That God in His personal relation to us, His dust-born creatures, who are but as a speck of dust in the sunlight, is Love—that He

loves us, despite our sins, loves us sinners in His Son—this must be divinely and not humanly understood. Only too often in the history of the Christian world has the love of God been far too humanly understood. It has in consequence been obscured by the severity of His moral judgments and the pressure of adversity; it has been forgotten that God is holy Love, eternal Love. Still further, the love of God has only too often been interpreted as the equivalent of human love. That God loves us as individuals, i.e., that He knows and desires to have each one of us, that He wishes to lead each one of us to an eternal goal, that He (and here we touch at its very heart the divine love for man) desires us individually, not only as means to a further end, as the crown of His creation (who will, therefore, perish when they shall have served their purpose as a means), but that He desires us as ends, that He takes us up into His own eternal purpose, thereby separating us from the perishable and exalting us to be eternal beings, ever blessed in His fellowship. This is what we mean when we confess Him, the Eternal Power, as Eternal Love—when we confess the Almighty as the Father. Thus we endeavor, very inadequately indeed, but, as far as we are able, to set forth the fullness of that which is embraced in the declaration with which the Creed of Christianity opens—I believe in the almighty Father.

This sublime announcement has come down to us from ancient times, but the passing centuries have detracted nothing from it. As our fathers in the past, so their descendants in the present, delight in making this confession, so full of imperishable truth, which shall abide in undiminished energy to all eternity.

No natural science can disturb the security of this confession. Without anger, without reviling, with a

smile, we look from the profound depths of eternal reality upon those who oppose to our proclamation of faith the pretended results of modern research in the field of natural science. We Christians regard all honest investigation of nature with respect and accept its results with gratitude. All study of nature whose only aim is to become acquainted with the facts of nature as they really are, we Christians regard as a thinking of the great thoughts of the Creator after Him; a serving, not of the devil, but of God Himself. But those who patch together a conception of the universe out of the elements of natural science, and construct a faith out of the knowledge gained through the reason and senses, we leave to their sublime simplicity.

No historical research can weaken this confession. Not that we could dispense with history. Our faith in God itself has developed from the history of divine revelation, and finds in it its imperishable and ever-new foundation. We are well aware of the industrious labors of those who honestly imagine that they can by their scientific historical studies uproot our faith in Him in whom the Almighty Father has revealed Himself to us. But we know them thoroughly, know what is their final impelling motive. While imagining that they are judging historically, they judge dogmatically, no less absolutely bound in their secular belief than the sons of Rome are bound in their ecclesiastical belief.

In truth—unbroken and unshaken stands to-day, as of old, the Creed of Christendom, declaring, "I believe in the Almighty Father"—a light shining in a dark place until the day dawn. But we who live in this light—by grace alone without any merit of our own, and, therefore, without Pharisaic claims; sustained in it by eternal truth, and, therefore, without fanaticism—we rest securely in this

utterance of simple faith. Our souls find in it a great comfort and great strength in good and evil days, in life as in death. We rest in it as children in the Father's bosom.

CHAPTER III

Maker of Heaven and Earth

By Dr. K. Dunkman
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"In the beginning God created heaven and earth." The first article of the Creed places us at once face to face with the fundamental testimony of God to Himself, face to face with the Creation, in order that we may clearly know what a great and mighty God we have, whose eternal power and Godhead we are to learn from His works. (Rom. 1 : 20.) In thus locating us, this article also places us at the same time face to face with the first word of "revelation," which is also a creation—a new and glorious creation in the midst of the old, i.e., "In the beginning God created heaven and earth." Without this announcement of Scripture we would, despite all the grandeur and power of the Creation, yet fail to recognize the Creator. As it is, both Creation and Revelation extend a welcoming hand to us in this article.

If we consider the matter carefully, it will be evident that Creation alone without Revelation is a book with seven seals; and likewise Revelation, without the Creation upon which it rests and in which it is rooted, is without foundation or goal. But it is of the greatest advantage for us that Revelation is based upon the firm foundation of Creation; for it thus brings Creation before our vision, opens our eyes to see it, and preserves us from all fanaticism, which is so prone to gaze into the

sky and forget the Creation of the olden time. But no! It behooves us to stand still and meditate upon the very first sentence of the Scriptures, for there is in it much, inconceivably much, to think of and meditate upon. The first sentence of the Bible is also the weightiest and most powerful.

"In the beginning." What an utterance is this! It asserts that when there was as yet no beginning, then the beginning of all beginnings was made. When there was as yet no time nor space, when there was no matter and no force, when there were as yet no thoughts nor ideas shrewdly wrought out by human brains, when there was only One, the eternal and in Himself all-sufficient God, the only blessed and mighty One—then it came to pass.

What came to pass? Creation. This little word is no less abyssmal than the former, "In the beginning." It very naturally follows the word "God," for it means the calling forth of something from nothing. Only the living God can create. Or will anyone maintain that we men, too, can create? We may be able to form after, to copy; we may recast old material at hand into new forms. But when we do so, these forms, like the various styles of art, are, after all, but endless reproductions of ancient models. Upon our human arts we have ourselves passed the judgment: There is nothing new under the sun, and all things that are have already been. Oh! how trivial, how pitiably small are in reality all the boasted creations of man; and how we all breathe more freely when a really great artist, mechanic or thinker speaks of his handiwork as insignificantly small compared with the great Creation. Yea, truly, there is only One who ever has created or can create. And since this is so, His creative work is a wonder-working beyond compare.

"Thou art the God who doest wonders." The work of Creation is the greatest of all marvels—the miracle of miracles. "Wonderful are thy works." (Ps. 139 : 14.) It is a wonderful manifestation of God's power that He alone can "create a new thing in the earth." (Jer. 31 : 22.) Hence, God creates without the help of any other, and without any tool; He creates out of Himself, out of His fullness of life. He only needs to "speak and it is done." "His word" is His tool; and by this we do not mean that His word is a magical incantation, but that God has life in Himself and needs only to wish or to command and all is done as He would have it. This is His "absolute omnipotence," of which the fathers spoke. We children of men have some little conception of this, but only so much as enables us to speak and stammer of the omnipotence of God. It makes us fairly shudder when we read: "By the word of Jehovah were the heavens made, and all the host of them by the breath of His mouth." Where does He appear more exalted, more truly divine than in this creative work? When the prophets address Him or speak of Him, they call Him "Jahwe, the Lord of heaven and earth," "the King above all the kingdoms of the earth."

Then we have the final words of the article: "Heaven and earth." These, again, mean much more than our "modern" wisdom can understand. The words are meant to include not only the heavens above us and the earth beneath us, but "things visible and things invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers" (Col. 1 : 16); in short, the two realms of a super-earthly and an earthly world. But the emphasis is placed upon the latter, and although the super-earthly realm is peopled with holy beings and heavenly forms, yet it is not these, but we men—we poor men upon this

little earth, who are the "crown of Creation"—for whom all these things have been created. This is made manifest so wonderfully in the biblical account of the Creation—not only in that God created man last of all, but especially in the fact that after creating man He created nothing more. "Beyond man God does not exert His creative power" (von Hoffmann). He now rests from His works, not as though He needed to rest, but because He has attained His end and now invites the men created to enter into His rest. (Heb. 4 : 4.)

But this is the rest of God, that the whole Creation shall ring aloud with the Creator's praise. "The heavens declare the glory of God and the firmament showeth His handiwork." God desires no lifeless rest. He wishes to hear His praises sounding forth in all places. There is no sweeter rest on earth than that beneath the rolling choral in the crowded temple of God, in which all voices rise and the heavenly hosts appear to join in harmony. The whole Creation is designed to be like such a glorious cathedral; and the congregation within it comprises all who live and move and have their being. The cherubim and seraphim, the morning stars above and the flowers beneath, mountains and valleys, plants and animals—all should leap and praise and shout for joy to "the Lord who made them." So long as the Creation does not do so, it is not a right Creation. Something is out of order in it, and it must be corrected; it cannot remain as it is. The omnipotence of God must and shall make it new and different. "Behold," says the Lord already under the old covenant through Isaiah, "I will make a new heaven and a new earth." Thus we see that the Creation embraces in itself the new creation—that creation, redemption and sanctification are only stages in the one great work of divine power and mercy.

But when we thus pass in review the entire unique biblical doctrine of Creation, must we not confess that we have wandered very far from it? It makes a distinct difference between the Creator and the creature, and this modern thought will not at all allow. The latter seeks, on the contrary, to bind the two inseparably together, speaking of a "Nature" which begets itself—*natura naturans*. It writes of the "natural history of Creation" (Haeckel). Even the most absurd ideas of a magical "development," which produces from matter the spirit of man, are pressed into the service of the "modern antagonism to the Creator" (Baer).

And even modern theologians themselves have come to cherish a strange aversion to this sublime article of the Creation of heaven and earth. They are so ready to speak of it as "cosmological speculation," wholly unfruitful and even injurious to true piety. Instead of the Creation of the world accomplished by the act of God, has come the curious idea of a simple dominion over the world which God possesses, and which we men are permitted, with the help of God, to exercise. Whatever goes beyond this is supposed to come of evil. There is such a boundless respect for the modern natural science, which is supposed to have really dethroned God and cast Him out of His own Creation, and in place of the wonderful world which He has made erected the cold and empty "mathematico-mechanical conception of the world"; in place of the revelation of life full of wonders and of energy, the "celestial mechanism" and bloodless arithmetical formulas—that everything which savors in any way of the ancient "myth of Creation" has been deliberately eliminated from dogmatics. And the sudden poverty which has been the immediate result has not even been observed. Man, it must be remembered, is such a

curious creature, that he regards any idea originating in his own mind, however shallow and perverted it may be, as a thousandfold more valuable and precious than a real treasure which he must accept as a gift from without. Any "creation" of his own, though it be but a pallid theory or some mechanical construction without spirit or life, like a modern moving picture show, appears incomparably grander than all the wonderful works of God.

Yet, for the modern man, within the last two hundred years, the word Creation has come to mean very much more than for those of earlier generations. The immensity and fullness of Creation, or of the universe, or "Nature," has been revealed to our generation to an extent undreamed of and of which our fathers could have had no conception. The ancients spoke of "heaven and earth," and knew scarcely more about either than that shining stars roamed through the heavens and that living creatures in great number and variety moved about over the surface of the earth. But we—we know all about the heavens and the earth! Gigantic telescopes have opened to our view the darkest depths of the universe, and modern science, by the help of wonderful instruments like the spectroscope, has brought down within our range the most distant celestial bodies. At the same time, we have become infinitely better acquainted with old Mother Earth. We are not only familiar with its surface from pole to pole; we not only have charted the hitherto unexplored regions of the continents of Africa and Central Asia, but we have fathomed the deepest crevices of the rocks, and are as familiar with the history of the earth extending through millions of years as with the course of our own lives.

And in connection with this exploration of nature, or the Creation, which is so far removed from any con-

ception of the ancients, the peculiarly modern science, i.e., natural science, has grown great and powerful. The human race has lived to see wonder upon wonder. New and undreamed of realms of fact and of life have been constantly revealed to it. Even the number of the sciences which participate in the investigation of nature can scarcely be counted, and it is constantly increasing. The Creation is so immensely rich that new fields of labor are ever opening up for its exploration. Fields which were at first the smallest and most insignificant expand so rapidly that they must be subdivided. The Creation has for us become inexhaustible! In the study of it, we must not only from year to year learn what we had never known, but we must also be ever rectifying our knowledge and proposing new "hypotheses" in place of the old.

That which proves to be immeasurable and inexhaustible comes to have a distinct element of the mysterious and almost terrible. Thus the Creation stands before us an insoluble riddle, a Sphinx. We grope around in the chaos, seeking order and "laws." We scarcely begin to think we have found some such laws when we are compelled to discredit them, and yet we cannot shake off the overwhelming conviction that we are living in the midst of a mighty order, which holds sway over an inexhaustible supply of material. Where are the laws that govern the universe? Who makes them? We scarcely seem to have discovered them, when they elude our grasp and vision. On the one hand, the substantial presence of simple lifeless matter in its amazing variety, combinations and energy! On the other, the still more amazing spectacle of living things with their endless variations of kind and type, of species and individuals! How many minds are wearing themselves out year after year in the attempt to

comprehend it all, and yet succeed only in reaching an ever more profound conviction that it is all incomprehensible!

But all this is still not the most enigmatical feature of this riddle of Creation. This we find only in ourselves—human beings, who are also children of this great Creation, of Nature. Our history, our personal inner life, our social spiritual fellowship overwhelm us with special questions and problems. "Heaven and earth"—and in the midst of them man—who can comprehend the boundless range of existences, who solve the fathomless depths of the problems which they contain?

"Creation" we reverently call it, and feel ourselves, as modern men, so infinitely small in comparison. The day has gone by when a too hasty "science" could satisfy us with its brief explanation, "Force and Matter"; or with the yet briefer term, "Energy." And although today such formulas and watchwords are still heard, they only serve to deceive the blind, ignorant multitude; in the circles of serious investigators they merely cause a smile. What has become of the followers of Diderot and La Mettrie, Büchner and Moleschott? And where will be the present followers of Haeckel and Ostwald? Up to the present day the Creation itself has always corrected, overturned, or, with light hand, pushed aside all the theories of men. We have had a surfeit of theories and are tired of them all. The actual truth in them is but as a drop in the bucket. But the spirit of the modern age, as it is revealed in confessions of the learned, in the words and songs of poets, in the creations of artists, is a sense of awe like that of Goethe in presence of the inexhaustible realities of the universe, and a mournful and gentle skepticism which from the ever-broadening and deepening research garners only new impulses to

persevere, new admiration and astonishment.

Creation—the word has fascinated us and we cannot escape from it. But do we also speak of the Creator? Alas, no! We neither use the word nor hear it uttered. How does it happen? Why does the modern man not venture to speak of the Creator? Modern science knows nothing of God; it does not know *Him*. Shall we cast this up to it as a reproach? That would be rash and foolish; for it can in fact no longer be denied that Nature as such does not lead us to God. Yes, it might if it were not for our sins and blindness! The Creation does not really lead immediately to the Creator, however nearly the words may be related. There is between them a chasm so wide and deep that no bridge of the understanding, with its deceptive syllogisms, can lead across it. No instrument, not even the most gigantic telescope, can reveal in the infinite the Creator. The Creation stands revealed before us and may be grasped by all the senses, but the Creator—He is, after all, a "hidden God." Revelation alone proclaims Him.

Because we no longer have regard for revelation, because it no longer is for us an equally potent and yet more potent reality than nature, the Creator remains to us unknown. We have only a dim, persistent presentiment which we cannot shake off, but certainly we can never attain. Therefore it is the very first declaration of revelation, and the very first declaration of the ancient Confession of the Christian faith, that we must learn to say with reverence, "Creator of heaven and earth."

But how do we arrive at this knowledge—or, rather, this faith? We must first inquire how it can have come to pass that we do not recognize the Creator in Creation. In ourselves must be found the reason that Creation is not for us an immediate revelation of the Creator, since

it is such for the "sons of God" in the book of Job, and for the Psalmists in their "psalms of nature." And it certainly is found in us, as all knowledge of the actual depends upon us and our ability to know. What, indeed, do we know of "Nature," except what forces itself upon and clings to our senses and our understanding? If we had other organs of sense, we would certainly see and feel very differently than we do now. How may the world apear to the spirit of a more highly organized being than man? We know only so far as we are capable of seeing and deciding. If we now, with all our research and scholarship, can get no farther than the conviction of the incomprehensibly mysterious; if we cannot succeed in the discovery of a "unity" or "harmony" in the entire scope of the universe—is not the reason to be found in ourselves? If we had another eye, a spirit of a different sort than we have by nature, we would certainly recognize the universe in its vast inner harmony and as a work of the living God.

If we now can see nothing but enigmas and contradictions, this proves only the enigmatical nature of our own being. We transfer to the world the enigmas of our existence, the contradictions of our own nature. We lack the "single eye," the inner unity and the harmony which are needful in order that the stars might speak to us the language which he speaks to whom his God has already given inner harmony and unity of nature. Psalmists and prophets praise the God who has given them the light and life which they lacked before, and now they look upon the works of Creation and behold again the mighty order and sublime unity of them all, recognize the God of their salvation in His voiceless works. The lilies of the field now speak of God who clothes them more wonderfully than Solomon in all his

glory. Now, the sweet singer sings of the delight which fills his heart as he looks upon the gorgeous summer, and he calls upon heaven and earth to celebrate with him the glory of God, since the heart of man is too poor and weak to sing a worthy hymn of praise.

It is our fault that we do not see the Creator, because we always see only ourselves and our own inward disharmony in everything about us. The only "unity" which we may yet appear to possess is a "unity of reason," a pitiable, empty unity without any substantial content, a mere figure. And what could there be for us in such a conception of the world as the philosophers have been constantly proclaiming and the "Monists" now hold up for our admiration? Where hides the true harmony which will clear up all the riddles and contradictions of our own lives, the problems of our personal history? True unity must prevail in the innermost center of our personal life, the unendurable conflict there must cease—then will Creation also become light around us and our whole life, with all its varying experiences, will lose its terrors.

We recognize this inner strife, for the revelation of God has opened our eyes to it. That revelation has taught us to look within before we look about us. It has shown us our sins. Sin is the profound contradiction in our own nature. Sinners cannot recognize God, cannot recognize the Creator even in the Creation. They shake their heads and doubt and cavil. They see everywhere only the reflected image of their own distracted lives. Hence the "heathen" know not God, although surrounded and sustained by the works of His hand. Yet, having still, even in their state of sin, a living testimony to God in their consciences, they people all nature with spirits and demons. Modern man has banished

these demons from the world, but that same world, now utterly soulless, turns its vacant stare upon him. Yet how easily, having nothing to which he can cling, he, with all his natural science, falls back into blind and stupid superstition! Spiritism and Occultism are the strange accompaniments of this boasted modern natural science. It cannot be otherwise. In our sinfulness, the eye of God looks directly upon us; it is an eye which sees us, but which we do not see. We only feel and know that we are seen, and, like Adam in Paradise, we hide ourselves. Now even Paradise no longer speaks to us of the Creator. There is only a mysterious rustling in the branches.

But when once the revelation of God in Christ has come to us, has revealed to us our sins and with them free forgiveness—the former lodged in the depths of our own nature and the latter flowing from out the depths of the divine mercy; when we have thus attained harmony within, found peace with God, and the riddle of our own life has been explained—then, oh, then, we can look up to heaven and about us on the earth with quite different eyes. All things now speak to us a different language. "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth his handiwork." The Creation has cast off its mask and proclaimed the solution of its riddle; for we have found the Creator through the revelation which He has given us.

What does the Creation tell us now? It speaks of the uninterrupted and eternal activity of the God who desires and seeks the salvation of His creatures. It tells not of blind and mute laws, of "brazen eternities," but of a wonderful directive activity and governance of God, who never loses sight of His great final aim. "My Father

worketh, and I work also." This is the saving activity of the Creator, who makes all created things minister to the completion of His work of redemption; for redemption is the final aim of the ways of God, that which He has always in view in His government of the world. In harmony with this is Paul's explanation of the "import" of all events, even those which we cannot understand: "Having determined their appointed seasons and the bounds of their habitation." (Rom. 17 : 26.) What is here said of the nations and of human life is true also of all that comes to pass in heaven and on earth. We cannot understand this, for so many things occur which indicate rather a blind, unfeeling fate than a Father in heaven whose heart is interested above all things in redemption. And yet it is really so. And does not redemption point to another and "higher" world? We are not to feel too much at home here below, in this Creation; but through it we should learn to bear ever in mind that our "conversation," i.e., our citizenship, is above. Hence, the great catastrophes of nature, the dark episodes of history, and the experiences of our personal lives are not in contradiction of the great redemptive aim of God. Toward that consummation He works ceaselessly and unweariedly. He is working out at the "humming loom of time" not only His own divine pattern, but the redemption, the salvation of the world. As the visible Creation is not in itself eternal, but only a created world, it must sometime cease to be, and a "new heavens and a new earth" arise. There, far otherwise than in the present world, the work shall praise its Ruler. There we shall profess allegiance far otherwise than here below, and praise the Creator with voices a thousandfold more rich and full, for there no tear will longer dim the eye, no sin will imprison the powers of the soul and drive it

hither and thither, restless and far from God in the very midst of His Creation.

But until this new heaven and new earth shall be revealed, we live with joy and comfort in the old structure. It is, indeed, a house with many cracks, but it does not fall down upon us; it holds us. A wonderful Providence rules our lives to the minutest particular, and no hair of our head falls without the consent of "The Father." How shall we explain this? How is it possible? Ah! we know: "All things were made by Him," by Him who died and rose again for us. All things exist "in Him," and He "is before all." Thus Jesus solves for us the riddle of the old world, the riddle of Creation. It stands fast upon Him and in Him. That is enough for us. That enables us to feel somewhat "at home" even in this world. Had we not Him, the world would be and remain a strange world to us, as a Sphinx remains unknown and strange. But now we have Him. Nay, rather, He has us, and takes us by the hand and shows us anew the firmament above us and the earth beneath our feet as the work of His heavenly Father. He teaches us to believe, so that we can with gratitude and rapture confess, "I believe in the Creator of heaven and earth."

CHAPTER IV

I Believe in Jesus Christ, the Only-begotten Son of God, Our Lord

By Dr. J. Haussleiter

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These few words embrace the entire substance of the Christian faith. That we call Jesus Christ our Lord and dare call upon His name,—this is our joy and blessedness, our comfort in all trials, and our strength in the battle of life. He who in faith has Jesus Christ as his Lord, has in Him at the same time the Father, and lives in the peace and fellowship of God. No one can truthfully say, "Lord Jesus," except by the power of the Holy Spirit. Thus this central declaration of our faith involves a recognition of the distinctive peculiarity of the faith and confession of Christianity, i.e., We believe in the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. This faith we confess when we call Jesus Christ our Lord.

Who would ever be able, then, to point out and display in a few brief statements the inexhaustible fullness of this faith? We must content ourselves with a few suggestions, and shall begin with historical details.

The first believer who confessed Christ, whose confession Jesus Himself approved and rewarded with far-reaching promises, was the disciple Simon Peter. Jesus desires to be recognized and confessed as the Christ, as the Son of the living God. This is evident from the significant incident at Cæsarea Philippi, which led to Peter's confession. Jesus is alone with the twelve. He raises

a question the reply to which will show whether the labor which He has up to this time bestowed upon the disciples for the development of their faith, with untiring patience presenting to them by word and deed the God-given testimony to His character and mission, has produced results and attained the purpose which He had in view in His intercourse with them. The incident is related in the three synoptic Gospels, most fully by Matthew. We follow his narrative because we do not, with some critics, regard the portions which go beyond the reports given by Mark and Luke as additions of a later traditional theology, and because we have in Matthew the only exhaustive description by an eye-witness. The reliability of this witness is not impaired by the fact that we do not have the original Aramaic text of his Gospel, but only a Greek translation of the original text. According to the unanimous testimony of the three synoptic writers, Jesus first asks a preparatory question. He inquires as to the opinion entertained by the multitude concerning Himself, the Son of man. (Matt. 16 : 13.) This self-assumed title is to be regarded as the subject in a sentence to which the appropriate predicate is to be attached. The "Son of man" has revealed Himself, i.e., the representative of the human race, who fulfills the task assigned to man, to whom, therefore, "nothing human is foreign." The term must, however, be understood not in the ancient classical sense, in which humanity constitutes a self-existent, autonomous cycle of being, but in the scriptural sense, which locates the peculiar essential nature of man in his divine relationship. As "Son of man," He meets the requirement of love to God and man which is made of all men by God, and that of the prophet Micah, that a man should love kindness and walk humbly with his God. What is said now of the "Son of man," who, for

the sake of the service He seeks to render, renounces all outward glory, and who, in His homelessness, is poorer than the foxes and the birds? The disciples, in their reply to this question of Jesus, do not report all the possible opinions of people about Him, but restrict themselves to such as acknowledge Him as a prophet, the bearer of divine revelation. In the unselfish ministry of Jesus, which was combined with extraordinary works of power and miraculous healings, there was recognized a ray of divine light, and there was, in consequence, accorded to Him in wide circles the rank of a prophet. But do these opinions of the people place a proper estimate upon the Son of man? Jesus inquires further: "But ye—whom do ye say that I am?" "Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God."

This utterance marks the birth-hour of Christian confession. Peter exalts Jesus far above the Old Testament prophets. He exalts Him also above the greatest of the prophets, John the Baptist, whose disciple he himself had been. According to the judgment of Peter, Jesus does not belong in a class, or category, with others; He stands alone as the One who completely fulfills the Old Testament prophecies—as the One in whom the fathers hoped and whose coming the prophets had foretold. He is the Messiah, the One anointed of God; the bearer of the Spirit, with whom God Himself has come to His people; the King of the kingdom, called to establish the divine government upon earth and to bring the blessings of the kingdom of God. As the bearer of the Spirit, He stands, as no other man, in fellowship with God. He is the "Son of the living God," who, in the power of the Spirit, utters divine life-giving words and performs divine saving works. The "Son of man," who exercises

on earth the prerogative of the heavenly Father in the forgiveness of sins (Matt. 9 : 6), is the "Son of God." He *is* the Son of God—will not become so at some time in the future. The greatness of this confession of Peter lies in the fact that in the previous works of Jesus, in His self-revelation in word and deed, which others have judged so differently, the apostle sees the sufficient, fully-authentic evidence of the Messiahship and divine Sonship of Jesus, because he finds and recognizes in His word the words of God, in His acts the acts of God, in His person the person of God. He, therefore, adds to the subject, "Jesus," the highest predicate which can be ascribed, beyond which no other can go. He is convinced also that Jesus at the proper time will manifest the glory of the divine sovereignty which the Messiah is appointed to establish upon earth. To accomplish this, it will only be necessary for Him to continue in the course of self-revelation which He has hitherto pursued.

The next step in this direction was taken when Jesus in the clearest terms acknowledged upon His part Peter's double confession of His Messiahship and divine Sonship. But He expresses His approval in such a way as to lay the emphasis upon the blessing which Peter shall enjoy in consequence of this confession. Jesus, even at the moment when the estimate of His own character is under discussion, thinks of the welfare of others. Blessed is he who can confess as Peter has done. He has come into decisive touch with the living God, has had a blessed experience of divine communion which is full to overflowing of salvation and blessing. "Flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father who is in heaven." The secret of the person of Jesus, which the Father alone knows (Matt. 11 : 27), is revealed by the Father to him who, like Peter, has recognized and recog-

nizes in the words and works of Jesus the words and works of God. Peter responded to the drawing of the Father to the Son as manifested in the self-revelation of Jesus. As one truly "taught of God" (John 6 : 45), he saw the connection existing between the teaching and miracles of Jesus and the revelation of God's love, and thus—far otherwise than the astonished multitude or the reviling scribes and Pharisees—attained to the proper conception of the person of Jesus, i.e., that He is the Son of the living God.

This confession is, and will for all time remain, the basis of the Christian Church, whose eternal perpetuity is assured only by its fidelity to this declaration of its faith. Because Simon is the first confessor, he receives from Jesus the name of "rock-man." "Upon this rock will I build my Church." Peter will be the first stone, to which shall be attached the other stones from the Jewish and the Gentile world, who will constitute the spiritual house of the Church of Jesus Christ which shall withdraw from the synagogue. The promise of Jesus was fulfilled on Pentecost, when Peter's testimony to Him who was rejected by Israel but exalted by God to be "both Lord and Christ" induced thousands of Jews to unite with the Christian Church; and again, in the house of the Gentile centurion at Cæsarea, whose conversion and reception into the Church was also brought about through the agency of Peter.* Thus Peter holds a unique place in the initial period of the Christian Church, in which he can, in the nature of the case, have no successor. It would be a great mistake to cast doubt upon the historicity of the words addressed to Peter by Jesus on account of their abuse by the Roman Church. That

* Compare also 1 Pet. 2 : 5.

Matthew 16 : 17-19 was not inserted by some Greek translator or reviser of an Aramaic Gospel is proved even by the linguistic style of the passage, which has from beginning to end as strictly Jewish a coloring as any passage in Matthew. But the unmistakable inner connection of the passage with verses 22f. and other very essential portions of the section extending to Matthew 20 : 28, is also an evidence that the first author of the book wrote the verses 17-20.*

Before turning to the confession of Christ in the first Christian congregation, we place by the side of Peter's confession that of Thomas. (John 20 : 28.) Between the incident at Cæsarea Philippi and the exclamation of Thomas called forth by the appearance of the risen Lord lies the consummation of the ministry of the Son of man, who on the cross "gave His life a ransom for many," but also the collapse of the incipient faith of the disciples, who took offence at the cross and the Crucified and fell into despair. It will never be possible to explain psychologically the sudden revival of the faith of the disciples if we deny the reality of the resurrection of Jesus and His appearances to them. The narrative of Thomas's recognition of the Lord bears in itself the evidence of its veracity. Who could have invented and circulated such a narrative during the life-time of the apostle? And especially after his death, who, in view of the panegyric character of all legends of the apostles, would have ventured to ascribe to him such stubbornness of unbelief? But the feature of the experience of Thomas which no one could have invented was the treatment accorded him by the risen Lord. He who well knows the thoughts of the disciple's heart and his obsti-

* Theodore Zahn, Com. on Matthew in loco.

nate utterances does not condemn but saves him, even now in His glorified state turning to him with pitying, redeeming love. Then burst forth from the overflowing heart of the disciple, which instinctively connects its earlier experiences with the present supreme moment, the adoring words, "My Lord and my God." The first martyr, Stephen, likewise worshiped the Lord Jesus. They thus, however, did no more than that which was always the distinguishing trait of the first Christian Church. One of the most frequent and widely-prevalent titles by which the early Christians were designated was, "Those who call upon the name of the Lord Jesus Christ."

We hear it frequently said in these days of strenuous controversy between the adherents of the old faith and the new liberal tendencies, that the difference between them cannot be briefly and clearly stated, as the boundary lines cross one another and are shifting in their character. It has also been maintained that the orthodox laity still preserve the old naïve attitude toward the Bible which prevailed before the critical era; but that not only the modern liberal theology, but modern positive theology as well, has without exception advanced beyond the ancient attitude, and that, therefore, if we are to draw a dividing line the latter must also be placed upon the left side. Such claims serve only to veil the seriousness of the conflict and mistake the point at which it really culminates, which is nothing more nor less than the attitude toward the Lord Jesus Christ. The contestants part from one another upon the question: Can and dare we call upon the Lord Christ in prayer? Is He really the Lord, to whom all power is given in heaven and on earth, who fulfills His promise that wherever two or three are gathered in His name He is in the midst of them? Is

He our Lord, in whose eternally availing ministry of love and in whose eternal providential care we live? Is the ancient petition of the Sunday liturgy, "Lord, have mercy; Christ, have mercy; Lord, have mercy upon us," justified, or is it to be eliminated in a thorough revision of the liturgy? He who desires to take a clear position in the confusion of our age dare not pass by this primary question of the Christian confession. And there can here be no compromise, avoiding the necessity of a simple Yes or a decided No. At this point, those who simply respect Jesus and true believers in Christ part company. But the latter have upon their side the innumerable company of Christian confessors in all ages. It is an undeniable fact that the custom of calling upon the name of Jesus is not the result of a gradual apotheosis or deification of Jesus, taking form in the course of decades, but that it appeared at once at the establishment of the Christian Church. It will be worth while for us to tarry for a little at this point.

Among the simple names by which the early Christians designated themselves, such as Believers, Saints, the Church of God, Brethren, the title, "Those who call upon the name of the Lord Jesus," held a peculiar place, as marking the difference between the belief in God cherished by the Christ-rejecting synagogue and the belief in God found in the Church of Jesus Christ. The Jewish-Christian Church at Jerusalem participated in the services of the temple as well as did the members of the synagogue; but the God upon whom they called had been made manifest in the person of the crucified and risen Jesus Christ, who, exalted as Lord by God, claimed and received the full service of believers, even the service of prayer. This was not rendered in such a way as to call upon Him as apart from God, but as honoring the Father by rendering to the Son the honor of adoration.

"He that honoreth not the Son, honoreth not the Father that sent Him." (John 5 : 23.) If the Creed is presented in the form: "I believe in God the Father . . . *and* in Jesus Christ His only Son," the form of expression may have the appearance of an addition, as though faith were reposed first in God and secondly in Jesus Christ, and as though God, Christ and the Holy Spirit were thought of as existing side by side, and faith as also correspondingly threefold. Nothing was further from the worship of the primitive Church than such a misunderstanding. It worshiped the *One* God, Creator of heaven and earth, who was now made manifest through His Son Jesus Christ, and who sent the Spirit to glorify Him, i.e., to impress upon the hearts of men the meaning of His death and exaltation, and to bestow power for the true worship of God. The historical revelation of God through Christ in the Spirit was viewed and recognized as an inner, living unity. Those who called upon the name of Jesus Christ had not surrendered the monotheistic faith of Israel, but that faith had received for them a fullness of living power of which the synagogue in its frigid conception of God had no suspicion.

The Scriptures furnish us an instructive illustration of the difference between the worship of God in the synagogue and in the Church of Jesus Christ. When the rabbi in the pericope of the synagogue service read the passage in Joel 2 : 32, "And it shall come to pass that whosoever shall call upon the name of Jehovah shall be delivered; for in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there shall be those that escape, as Jehovah hath said, and among the remnant those whom Jehovah doth call," and in reading carefully avoided the sacred name in order not to profane it, pronouncing instead of Jehovah, "Adonai, Lord," he could appeal for the explanation of

the passage to nothing more than the memories of the great, powerful and terrible God of their fathers, who had given them rich and gracious promises, and he might add a prayer that God might fulfill His promises and set up a banner to assemble the scattered nation from the four corners of the earth. But in the present, there was no sign of the fulfillment of the promise. Jerusalem was groaning under the oppression of the heathen. How entirely different does this prophecy sound and how different its interpretation when the apostle Peter, in his first Pentecost sermon, or Paul, in his Epistle to the Romans, quoted the words of Joel and gave joyous testimony to their fulfillment in the present! The day of salvation has come; God has poured out His Spirit upon believers; His nearness can now be personally experienced. The God of salvation proclaimed by the prophets has been revealed in the Christ who came from God and has been again exalted to His right hand. Whosoever now calls upon the name of the Lord Jesus Christ shall be saved. The worship of Jehovah enjoined in the law and the prophets is transformed into the calling upon Jesus Christ. The latter is as necessary and as effectual as the former. All who base their trust for salvation upon Jesus and call upon Him in faith become partakers of salvation and experience the assurance of their deliverance. For Jesus is the Lord, rich unto all who call upon Him, both Jews and Greeks. Thus, to become a Christian means to call upon the name of the Lord Jesus.

The way in which Peter and Paul independently represent the above Old Testament prophecy as fulfilled is a striking illustration of the consistency and vividness of the apostolic faith. The Lord, the calling upon whom brings man into the possession of salvation, is Jesus Christ. (Acts 2 : 36 with v. 21.) Those who call upon the

name of the Lord are Christians. When Ananias in Damascus, in prayerful intercourse with Christ, would describe Saul as a persecutor of Christians, he says, "He hath authority from the chief priests to bind all that call upon thy name." In precisely the same way, the Christians at Damascus, when they hear that Saul is preaching Christ in the synagogues, say, "Is not this he that in Jerusalem made havoc of them that called on this name?" Saul himself had meanwhile become a caller upon this name. (Acts 22 : 16.) And thus Paul, in the opening verses of his First Epistle to the Corinthians, designates the worship of Jesus as the distinguishing trait of all Christians, the bond of unity between the widely-scattered churches.

The basic confession of allegiance to Jesus Christ, with which the calling upon His name was associated, was made at baptism. This is evident when Ananias says to Saul, "Arise and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on His name." The association of the confession of Christ with the act of baptism is confirmed by the testimony of the First Epistle of John. In the fourth chapter we have in the second verse the general designation without any indication of time, "Every spirit that confesseth," and in the fifteenth verse, the more specific, "Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God abideth in him and he in God." The reference is here to a single definite act of confession, which has been effectually preceded by the apostolic testimony "that the Father hath sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world" (v. 14). Whoever has (in baptism) made the confession that Jesus is the Son of God, in him God abides and he in God. As the result of the confession once made, there exists a permanent union of God with the confessor, an indwelling of God in the believer, which, according to

other passages, is associated with the being "born of God" (1 John 4 : 7; 5 : 1), and the new birth of water and Spirit. (John 3 : 3, 5.) The terms, confess (ὁμολογεῖν) and confession (ὁμολογία), which became at a later day the current designations of the baptismal symbol, appear to have been preferably employed in this sense already in the days of the apostles. When Paul, in Rom. 10 : 10, declares that the effect of confession by the mouth is that it ministers "to salvation," and presents as the content of confession, "that Jesus is Lord," many interpreters rightly think that he refers to the baptismal confession. We recognize the same reference when Timothy is reminded of the "good confession" which he "confessed in the sight of many witnesses." The author of the Epistle to the Hebrews exhorts the persecuted Christians to whom he writes to hold fast "the confession." (Heb. 4 . 14.) As the content of this confession has before been stated to be "Jesus, the Son of God," we have every reason here also to think of the baptismal confession. In the text of the Acts which Irenæus brought from Asia Minor in the latter half of the second century stand, as the baptismal confession of the Eunuch, the words, "I believe that Jesus is the Son of God."*

The designation of Jesus as the "only-begotten" Son is derived from the language employed by John. (John 1 : 14, 18; 3 : 16, 18; 1 John 4 : 9.) Jesus is the Son of God in an entirely unique sense. He was with God before He became man. If we follow the reading of John 1 : 13 which prevailed from the second to the fourth century, and which has also left clear traces in the ancient manuscripts of the Orient,† the verse expressly declares, "He

* Compare Adv. haer. III. 12 : 8.

† Compare Zahn's proof in his Commentary on the Gospel of John.

was begotten and born, not from the mingling of the blood of two human beings, and not from the will of the flesh, and not from the will of a man, but from God." It is sufficient; however, in this connection, to have referred to this verse, so remarkable even in the traditional interpretation. The fuller examination of it belongs in the chapter which discusses the clause, "born of the Virgin Mary."

"I believe in Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God our Lord." The primitive Christian Church had a clear and consistent conception of this article. It was for those early believers the very central point of the Christian faith. If we penetrate with any degree of thoroughness into the thought of the First Epistle of John, we will recognize the Trinitarian character of the faith which announced its allegiance to Christ as the Son of God. We have already commented upon 1 John 4 : 15. Yet more distinctly does the conclusion of the epistle set forth the interlacing of the fellowship with God and with Christ. "And we are in him that is true (i.e., in God), even (because we are) in his Son Jesus Christ. This (i.e., the God manifest in Jesus Christ) is the true God and eternal life" (5 : 20). It is a tremendously significant declaration made by John, and one confirmed by the entire history of the Church: "He that hath the Son hath the life; he that hath not the Son of God hath not the life" (5 : 12). The Christian faith is a having, a possessing, a standing in the fellowship of God. A Christian is one, as Paul expresses it, "who is in Christ." Are not these declarations too large? Do they not exceed the limits of the humanly possible? But in faith there enters into man the power of God, to which all things are possible. Only in the power of the Holy Spirit can anyone believe. "He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in him. . . . And it is the Spirit that beareth wit-

ness, because the Spirit is the truth." (1 John 5 : 10, 6.) Christians have received the anointing from the Holy One, and have thereby come to "know all things" (2 : 20. Observe the use of the word "know" six times in verses 13 to 20). It is a closed circle of divine realities into which the believer is transported.

Who could seriously urge us to surrender the faith in Christ which displays its power so wonderfully in our poverty, in times of trial, in distress, and in the hour of death, and accept in exchange for it a more or less undefined glorifying of Jesus which is not effected by the Holy Spirit, but originates in our own spirits? On the contrary, how gladly would we help to remove the hindrances to faith which prevent the full acceptance of that faith in Christ which has through all ages of the Church been its very life! One chief hindrance has been the false notion that we have to do with a *law* of faith, a compulsory belief. When the unmerited and incomparably great gift of God in Jesus Christ His Son is proclaimed and offered to us, there is presented to our view the simple, clear, pure Gospel, which is far removed from all law and legal compulsion, and which can be correctly understood only when it is not forced into any legal categories such as human reason devises in order to embrace the phenomena of earthly history. The revelation of God in Christ is *sui generis,* unique, and is to be measured by no other rule than that which it itself furnishes. Since it is a reality, and can be really experienced, it is also certainly a possibility. The sum of possibilities observed beyond the range of this revelation does not extend to it nor include it. He who seeks to derive it from the sum of such possibilities, or limit it by them, remains blind and unsusceptible to its real character and to the new element which it has introduced and

offers. But his eyes are opened who knows and confesses himself a poor, sinful man, living far from God and subject to death, and who now hears the message that we may believe in the miracle of the revelation of the love of God, who, in Christ, His Son, has given Himself to us to be our Father. This is the greatest opportunity, the highest privilege—from the natural bondage of our will and the servitude of the flesh to be permitted to attain the blessed liberty of the children of God. To such liberty are we led by faith in Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, our Lord. For, as we confess with Peter and the Church of all ages, "In none other is there salvation: for neither is there any other name under heaven that is given among men, wherein we must be saved." (Acts 4 : 12.)

CHAPTER V

Conceived by the Holy Ghost, Born of the Virgin Mary

By Dr. R. Gruetzmacher
PROFESSOR OF SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY AT ERLANGEN

When our eyes have rested upon the trunk and crown of a mighty oak, they involuntarily fall to the sod beneath, where the great roots branch forth to take firm hold among the underlying rocks. As we wander upon the shore of a broad river, our thoughts are irresistibly carried upward to its source far up upon the heaven-kissing mountain heights. If we become warmly attached to some fellow-traveler upon life's highway, we will certainly want to know something of his home and parents, of his birth and early youth. Until we have some information upon these points our relations cannot be quite fully confidential. In biographies of great men, the most careful attention is given in our day to the investigation of their ancestry, since it is realized that here, as elsewhere, the germ bears within itself the potency of the fruit. Thus the Church of Christ has always cast a backward glance from the life and exaltation of Jesus to the circumstances of His origin. Won by the triumphant power of His manhood, her eyes have been fixed upon the Child upon whose shoulders the divine government already rested. To her reverent questionings as to the birth of her Lord and Master, she has from the very beginning found the answer in the resounding double stroke of her most ancient Confession

"Conceived by the Holy Ghost—
Born of the Virgin Mary."

Three things are involved in this confession: 1. A historical fact. 2. A divine miracle. 3. A religious truth and power.

I. We can speak of historical facts only when the reports which we have of them are trustworthy. Thus our judgment as to the actual course of events connected with the entrance of Jesus upon the stage of history depends upon whether we possess reliable sources of information concerning them.* Any documents which claim to be such must be tested without prejudice. Two evangelists, Matthew and Luke, give details as to the birth of Jesus. According to both, the Virgin Mary became the mother of Jesus in the power of the Holy Spirit. This testimony is borne by the oldest and best texts of these two chapters. Partisan scientific half-culture has, indeed, attempted to awaken prejudice in wide circles by asserting that, according to the original form of Matthew's narrative, Joseph was called the natural father of Jesus. The truth is that we possess an ancient Syrian translation, the so-called Syro-Sinaiticus, which in one single half-verse makes Jesus the son of Joseph, while in the other half of the verse and in the further course of the narrative it presents the virgin birth. Furthermore, it may, with the greatest probability, be explained how this mixed form of the verse arose by an error (clearly traceable) in doubling the name of Joseph in translating from

*For all details and fuller evidence I may be permitted to refer to my work, "Die Jungfrauengeburt," 2d ed., 1911. In addition to the literature there designated, I would call attention to the excellent and exhaustive work of Dr. Orr, of Scotland, "The Virgin Birth of Christ," 1907, which presents in an appendix a list of opinions expressed by scholars of various countries. For the interpretation of Luke's acount of the childhood of Jesus, Zahn's work, "Evangelium des Lukas" (1913), stands in the front rank.

the Greek text,* which describes exclusively the virgin birth. There is even less ground for the bold attempts to strike out verses 34 and 35 of the narrative in the first chapter of Luke and, in the 23d verse of the third chapter, the parenthetical clause, "as was supposed." They are, as Zahn clearly proves, "entirely without support in the traditional texts traceable up to the time of Justin Martyr." Failing thus to eliminate the miraculous birth of Jesus from the histories of the nativity in Matthew and Luke, the attempt is made to discover some substantial objections to it. Both narratives undeniably lay great stress upon the connection of Jesus with Joseph, whose genealogical register they both present, and they both represent His place in the house of David as dependent entirely upon this relationship. How, it is asked, can Joseph and his ancestry have any significance for Jesus if He was not his natural son? But this question only reveals the inability of those who offer it to appreciate the viewpoint of Judaism and the ancient world in general. According to this, all the prerogatives of His father Joseph descended to Jesus, because He was born in the former's legally contracted marriage with Mary. According to the view of the evangelists, Jesus was the natural son of Mary, but the legal son of the marriage of Joseph and Mary. Further, it is said that Mary, by her question when the angel announces the coming birth of Jesus, "How shall this be, seeing I know not a man?" furnishes an astonishing contradiction of her supposed approaching marriage to Joseph, with whom, as

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* Now, also, in the so-called Koridethi Gospels (see Wohlenberg, Theol. Lit.-Blatt, 1913, p. 396). Upon the "monstrous forcing of the text" which Soden has recently attempted in his edition of the New Testament, compare Wohlenberg in his "Theologie der Gegenwart, 1913, p. 260ff.

her espoused, she must have been acquainted, and that this contradiction renders the whole narrative utterly untrustworthy. But if the investigator is at all familiar with the usage of the Greek word "know," and especially of its Hebrew parallel, and knows that they are equivalent to "have sexual intercourse," and if he observes also that Mary uses the present tense of the word—if, finally, he is at all psychologically capable of picturing to himself the entire situation, in which Mary speaks suddenly, timidly and impulsively, this difficulty will be reduced to nothing. Mary replies to the announcement of the angel, that she now, in the moment in which he is addressing her, shall as a virgin conceive a son, with the perfectly natural objection: "How is it possible that I shall now conceive since I have conjugal relations with no man?"

Thus the narratives of the birth of Jesus in Matthew and Luke, from the beginning and throughout, bear the simple and clear testimony that He was born of the Virgin Mary in the power of the Holy Spirit. They are the only sources which furnish any details concerning the birth of Jesus. If we are unwilling to accept them, we must be content without any information as to the Saviour's birth; for the other New Testament writings nowhere suggest any other origin for Jesus, nor place themselves in any way in opposition to the account of the two evangelists. That they directly testify to the virgin birth, or at least take it for granted, cannot be proved with absolute certainty, although it may be maintained with a degree of probability. That Jesus should frequently, and especially by the multitude, be called the son of Joseph, is, after what has been observed as to the legal relationship of Joseph to Jesus, to be taken as a matter of course, since the miraculous birth of the Lord remained for the time being a secret of His own followers. That

the mother and relatives of Jesus often took offence at His subsequent conduct in the pursuit of His mission, would disprove the miraculous birth only if it had been possible for human eyes to deduce infallibly from such a birth all the features which would mark His earthly life, and if the relatives of Jesus had not, like many others who have witnessed miracles, fallen even after such experience into doubts and waverings. On the other hand, Mary at the wedding in Cana, before the first miracle of Jesus, would have had no such absolute confidence in His power if she had not recalled the miracle of His birth. The evangelist Mark, in accordance with his purpose to picture only the public life of Jesus, had no occasion to speak of His birth. But John directed his eagle glance yet further back to the eternal birth of the "Word" with God, and in the conclusion of the prologue of his Gospel declares that It became flesh. In the midst of the opening verses of the same Gospel, we read of those who become the children of God, that they are begotten "not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor *of the will of man,* but *of God.*" Inasmuch as John certainly (as can be clearly proved by historical evidence) was acquainted with the Gospels of Matthew and Luke with their accounts of the birth of Jesus, it is natural to see in the expressions italicized above an allusion to the birth of Jesus,—in the one, "not of the will of man," a negative statement of that which is positively affirmed in the virgin birth, and in the other, "of God," a somewhat more general form of the expression, "of the Holy Spirit," in Matthew. Believers are to be born after the example of their Lord. There would, indeed, be a direct reference to the virgin birth in John, if, following not the majority but the best of the manuscripts, in verse 13 we adopt the singular form of the pronoun and verb,

"Who was born; not of the will of man, but of God," as we should, according to the opinion of such scholars as Blass and Zahn.

In Paul, whose entire interest was concentrated upon the death of Jesus on the cross and His resurrection, and who barely touches suggestively upon a few separate features of His life, we find a distinct reference to the birth of Jesus in only one passage (Gal. 4 : 4), in which he says that God in the fullness of time sent His Son, "born of a woman, born under the (a) law." According to the primary meaning of the language here employed, the subject of discourse is not the virgin birth, much less the descent of Christ from a father and mother. But as Paul had no other occasion for making reference only to the maternal ancestry of Jesus, and as he at all other points in the passage contents himself with general expressions (he speaks not of the Mosaic, but only of *a* law) it is most probable that he had in mind the miraculous birth of Jesus, as reported by his pupil and traveling companion, Luke, in the Gospel written by the latter.

We thus discover the actual facts in the case to be that the New Testament treats specifically of the virgin birth of Jesus only in the earlier portions of Matthew and Luke, and that John and Paul each apparently allude to it in only one passage. It is precisely this kind of testimony that we have for many facts and opinions of the primitive Church, which, strange to say, is accepted as sufficient by the very same critics who find it inadmissible in the case of the account of the birth of Jesus. The Sermon on the Mount and the Lord's Prayer are also reported to us only in two of the Gospels. Paul never refers directly to either of them. Even the parables of the Prodigal Son and the Good Samaritan appear in but

one Gospel, and we find no trace of them elsewhere in the New Testament.

The credibility of the narrative in our Gospels, regarded from the historical point of view, depends chiefly upon the estimate placed upon the sources from which it is derived. Do the reports found in the Gospels come from persons who were in a position to know the facts concerning the birth of Christ, and were these facts, as reported by them, then recorded by trustworthy men, or are they only Christianized legends of either Jewish or heathen origin? The efforts put forth within the last century and more to sustain the latter view have been really astounding. Learned theologians and philologists, natural scientists and social-democratic writers, have vied with one another in searching for the supposed legendary sources of our evangelical narratives. We may gain a compact view of these attempts from the words of Harnack: "Seydel and Eysinga thought of Buddhism as the source; Gardner and Bousset thought of Egyptian antecedents; Gunkel and Cheyne of Babylonian originals; Pfleiderer of Phrygian cults; Schmiedel of Persian teachings; Dieterich of Mithras; Usener of Greek mythology; Butler of Eleusinian or other unknown mysteries; Lobstein of spontaneous origin; Renan of invention by the parents of Jesus or one of the evangelists; Abbot of the teachings of Philo; Soltau and others of the legends of the miraculous birth of Plato and Augustus; Soltau of the visit of Tiridates. This register is discouraging in the highest degree. For the present (!) we remain with the later Judaism." * Under these conditions no one can blame us if we do not eagerly proceed to an examination of this register of "scientific" fantasies and critical

* Dogmengeschichte, 4th edition, I. 113, note 1.

incapacity,* but, "for the present," content ourselves with tracing the record to reliable Christian tradition. Since, in the heathen world, although the idea repeatedly appeared that there were peculiar and miraculous circumstances attending the birth of certain individual great men, no one was ever definitely represented as born of a virgin through the Holy Spirit, we are naturally led to seek in the statements of our sources some connection with declarations of the Old Testament. Matthew, it may be said, sees the prophecy in the seventh chapter of Isaiah fulfilled in the birth of Jesus, and we can easily imagine that his report was a development of the material thus furnished. But here, too, a more careful examination will lead to a different conclusion. Matthew is the first, and was for a long time the only Jewish (i.e., Jewish-Christian) writer who interpreted Isaiah 7 messianically, and who understands it as a prophecy of the virgin birth of Christ. This understanding occurs to him only as an outgrowth of his faith in the virgin birth, which faith was established in another way, i.e., based upon historical evidence. Consequently, it was the fulfillment which led to the discovery and understanding of the prophecy.

In the narratives of the birth of Christ in Matthew and Luke, we have before us recensions of two independent traditions of the earliest Christian Church. The distinctly Old Testament coloring, both as to form and matter, of the first two chapters of Luke, in marked contrast with the Greek-Christian caste of the remainder of

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* Compare the careful examination of the separate views in my book, "Die Jungfrauengeburt," pp. 29-40; also Orr, l. c. The latest production of a reckless fancy, leading us to Egypt, is furnished by Gressmann, "Das Weihnachtsevangelium," 1914.

this Gospel, makes it very probable that the evangelist had the use of a Jewish-Christian tradition, either in written or in a relatively fixed oral form. Many considerations, to which Zahn especially has called attention, make it appear very probable that the original source of the items in the account here given is to be found in the declarations of Mary herself. Having become a prominent member of the Church, Mary, after the death and resurrection of Jesus, would naturally speak with a sanctified pride of the miraculous birth of her Son, now become her Lord, giving prominence from time to time to various separate aspects of the narrative. The report of these wonderful things was spread widely through the Church. It reached the ears not only of the Gentile-Christian evangelist Luke, but yet more easily and directly those of the Jewish-Christian Matthew. He related for us the things which he had heard, presenting the history of the birth of the Messiah in a form in harmony with the special purpose of his Gospel. Not much more than a generation after the death of Jesus, the reports of Matthew and Luke were written down, at a time when many contemporaries and relatives of Jesus were yet living. It is utterly inconceivable that these persons could have allowed heathen legends or Jewish tales as to the birth of their Master to be imposed upon them. But we meet in the Church of the apostolic age not the slightest indication to dispute the virgin birth of Christ. On the contrary, when the Church framed her first fixed form of confession, at the close of the first or beginning of the second century, she at once incorporated in it the words, "Conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary." They are an integral part of the very earliest form of the Creed known to us. The Church fathers from very early times were thoroughly familiar

and in accord with it. It is only among parties utterly alienated from genuine Christianity, such as the Ebionites and certain Gnostic sects, that these clauses were rejected, and that upon dogmatic grounds. Not only have the Roman and Greek Churches held fast to this article of the Creed, but with especial energy also the Church of the Reformation under the leadership of Luther, whose cordial acceptance of it is strikingly seen in his Christmas hymns. Even Protestant factions which in other points wandered far from the faith of primitive Christianity, such as the Socinians, still held firmly to the miraculous birth. It is only since the rise of Rationalism that criticism of it has been growing ever more insistent, and this not as a result of superior historical insight, but because of a drifting of dogmatics and philosophical conceptions of the universe away from the principles of Christianity.

II. The clause in the Creed, "Conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary," proclaims not only a historical fact, but also a divine miracle. These two are not mutually exclusive, but most intimately connected. The wonderful revelation of God in Christ is actualized in the form of history, and all its separate historical manifestations have place in the Christian redemptive program only in so far as they include divine miracles. Attention has often been called, in a well-meant effort to defend the doctrine in question, to the fact that in the natural world births sometimes occur without masculine intervention, and the birth of Jesus has been supposed to be analogous to this. But if this illustration were pertinent, we would then be dealing with a rare, and, perhaps, unique natural event, which would have no place in the history of religion, least of all in the annals of Christianity. Such a position can be assigned to the

birth of Christ only if it be recognized as a divine miracle, i.e., only if God works directly and immediately from out eternity and brings things to pass in nature and history which could never in any case have been accomplished by their own powers. The Creed endeavors to express this idea when it sees the positive cause of the miraculous birth of Jesus in the fact that He was "conceived by the Holy Ghost." According to Luke, the angel announces, "The Holy Spirit shall come upon thee, and the power of the Most High shall overshadow thee"; and, according to Matthew, he declares to Joseph, "That which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit." Thus our eyes are directed upward from the world to God, from history to eternity, from the powers of earth to the might of the Lord. The birth of Jesus leads us up to God, and, indeed, into His inmost nature, into His Spirit, who embraces in Himself all creative energies. The biblical writers do not think of the third separate Person of the Holy Trinity, who was manifested in history only after the departure of Jesus, but, in harmony with the Old Testament, of the Spirit of God, which at the Creation brooded over chaos and gave it form, which entered into the human body and became in it a living soul, which by its creative power first called nature and humanity into life. It is the Spirit of God which came upon the heroes and laid hold upon the prophets, imparting to them the knowledge and blessings of another world, which they never could have secured through the exercise of their natural endowments. The Spirit is the creative power of the Most High. This divine energy was exerted at the birth of Jesus as directly and immediately as at the creation of the world, of man, or at the appearance of any extraordinary events recorded in the Old Testament. We stand, therefore, face to face with a miracle, under-

standing this to be an event whose characteristic feature is that it is due to the power of God alone. But since it is the creative *Holy* Spirit of God who here exerts His energy, we are facing a miracle whose peculiarity does not consist alone in its distinctness from the works of the Creator, but also in its opposition to sin. That God should, in the form of this miracle, interfere in a fresh creative way in the world (itself formed by Him) and its natural course, finds its truest justification, not in the fact that He thereby proves ever anew that He is the absolute Lord of nature, but in the fact that He here, as the Holy One, enters the world of sinners for their salvation. The Old Testament saint had already learned to pray: "Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy Holy Spirit from me," since he knew that the forgiving grace of God was inseparably connected with the gift of the Holy Spirit; and the Old Testament promise of the outpouring of the Spirit was at the same time the promise of new life free from sin. A divine miracle is, therefore, always a miracle of salvation, having in view the vanquishing of sin. Such a miracle the Christian Church confesses, when she says: "Conceived by the Holy Ghost." Here begins the greatest and the most decisive opposition to sin, and hence the Holy Spirit of God enters upon the scene in His full energy and power and brings perfect holiness into existence in history. But if the birth of Christ is thus a divine miracle, in which the most profound and final features of the Christian conception of God and the world are comprehended, it may be easily understood that this confession is possible only for those who recognize and acknowledge an almighty Creator and Governor of the world, and a sin-combating and a sin-conquering God of salvation. But he who does not believe in God, or at least not in

the sense of the first article of the Creed, who does not acknowledge the reality of sin and the need of its removal by the power of God alone, is driven by necessity to deny the divine miracle of the Nativity. On the other hand, the Christian Church, as she recognizes the divinely miraculous in the entire history of redemption, so with peculiar joy and gratitude confesses the unique miracle in the birth of Christ because she derives from it a peculiar religious enlightenment and power.

III. It is not the task of Christian faith and Christian theology to maintain the necessity of a particular miracle, in the sense that God was compelled to perform it precisely as He did, nor to deduce it in its characteristic features from Christian experience. It is, however, their duty to gain from every miracle actually performed in the course of history some religious ideas and forces. We dare, therefore, neither say that God was under the necessity of performing the miracle of the birth of Jesus through His conception in the womb of the Virgin, nor that our religious experience requires this fact as its basis. Yet the divine miracle, as actually performed in His self-revelation, is designed precisely by its entire definite form to awaken religious ideas and forces. The New Testament reports themselves here point out the way for us. In Matthew it is said: "And she shall bring forth a Son; and thou shalt call his name Jesus; for it is he that shall save his people from their sins"—ideas which are in Luke developed into the further statement, that this Jesus will be the promised king out of the house of David, to which is added the announcement: "The holy thing which is begotten of thee shall be called the Son of God." The virgin birth is the appropriate form in which God established in history the sinlessness and Sonship of Jesus. If anything is positively established in

the New Testament and in the faith of Christendom, it is the double truth of the perfect sinlessness and the peculiar divine Sonship of the Lord. Yet neither of these traits was developed in the course of His earthly life, but both were present from its very beginning. How this came to be is explained by the birth from the Holy Ghost and the Virgin Mary. The Holy Spirit created the sinlessness of the child. He established the holy life of a human personality, which, because in its growth remaining free from sin, could save the people from their sins.

The absence of human fatherhood made Jesus free from all dependence upon a human personality to whose will He was indebted for His life. This enables us to understand how this Jesus was exactly fitted to become the Lord and King of the human race. As John has revealed the profoundest significance of so many facts of the Gospel history, so especially in the case of the virgin birth he expresses this in a striking way by three negations: "Not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of a man." All carnal paternity, but also as well all voluntary activity of the human spirit, must be excluded at the birth of Jesus. It is in no sense a product of humanity. Humanity contributed nothing to His coming; but only received Him. The Virgin takes what God gives. God is here the originator, or, speaking yet more precisely, the eternal Son Himself assumes the earthly flesh and the human mode of existence. For it is not the idea that something absolutely new shall appear, which did not exist before, but that the Son, Himself not subject to the limitations of time, shall assume a form of human existence in which He can accomplish the historical redemption which He has in view. The divinity of Jesus is the creative principle; His eternal spiritual will acts here. Therefore, no will of man can

act concurrently with it, but only the humble Virgin, who says, "Behold, the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word." But there was also a real necessity for her participation in the execution of the plan. Hence Paul, in the passage from the Epistle to the Galatians already cited, lays such emphasis upon the "born of a woman." For just as certainly as Jesus could not be a creature of humanity must He nevertheless be a member of the human race. And this He became through His actual birth from a woman, but not—as the Gnostics fancied—by descending into an earthly body. The birth from the Virgin by the negative element inherent in it made possible His unique divine Sonship; by its positive element, His true humanity. The miraculous birth of Jesus, therefore, furnishes us a religious apprehension of the mode in which, by the will of God, His sinlessness and divine-human Sonship were established in the current of history. It shows us how the "hero of double descent" was born of the Holy Spirit of God.

These religious conceptions are direct sources of religious power, as every dogma based upon revelation normally promotes religion.* We here see God in the exertion of His creative power. He, therefore, becomes great to us also in His relation to our lives, and we become small. He does not use the will of man to accomplish His purpose, but calls into His service the humble receptivity of the maiden. We recognize the fact that with God everything depends upon holiness, and that He exerts His power to perform miracles with the end in view that holiness may be produced also in and by us.

But, above all, Christ Himself by His birth, as thus

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* Compare my article, "Der religiöse Character des Dogma," in Neue Kirchliche Zeitschrift, 1913.

testified, becomes for us glorious and wonderful, and we become ever more and more fully convinced that this Son of the Virgin is really qualified to redeem and sanctify us. The birth of Jesus, "conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary," therefore remains one of the fundamental facts of salvation, helping us to make our own the faith and life of the Christian religion.

CHAPTER VI

Suffered under Pontius Pilate, Crucified, Dead, Buried, Descended into Hell

By Dr. P. Althaus

PROFESSOR OF SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY AT LEIPSIC

These words carry us into the real center of the Creed. They describe the historical redemptive work of Jesus Christ. In His suffering and death He accomplished the deliverance upon the ground of which He has become "our Lord." The gateway of Christ's passion stands open before us, and we behold erected before our eyes the cross on Golgotha. The whole life of the Lord is indeed a course of suffering. As He was "in all points tempted like as we are," so He constantly suffered under the burden of the sin of the world, under the hatred of His enemies, the unreceptiveness of the multitude, the misunderstandings and hardness of heart of His disciples. But our symbol passes by all of this. As indicated by the clause, "under Pontius Pilate," it has in mind the sufferings of Jesus which began in the agony of soul in the garden of Gethsemane and reached their culmination on the cross—the "Great Passion," or, as Luther expresses it, "the true sufferings," when the innocent Accused One was delivered into the hands of the heathen judge and upon his verdict led away to death upon the accursed tree. With this incomparable history the life of the believing Church has developed in the most intimate and unique association. Nothing else can be

placed upon an equality with it. This history rings through all her prayers and hymns; it is the exhaustless fountain whence has flowed ceaselessly the stream of sacred song. The noblest creations of Christian art have drawn their inspiration from it. Our most overpowering oratorios, our most splendid paintings and statuary are in illustration of the passion of Jesus. It holds an entirely unique place in the very center of our whole religious thought and experience.

The criticism has been made upon the Creed that it passes immediately from the birth of the Lord to His sufferings and death. We miss any statement concerning His earthly life, His words so full of spirit and life, and His mighty deeds. But such critics overlook the fact that we have before us here the basic Confession, whose only purpose is to set forth in brief, pithy statements the leading facts bearing upon our salvation, upon which the faith of the Church principally depends, i.e., the birth, death and exaltation of Jesus. It is not at all implied in this that the historical activity of the Lord during His earthly life has no important relation to the work of redemption. His whole official career was spent in the service of one and the same mediatorial work which had been committed to Him as the God-appointed Reconciler. His proclamations of truth and His works of healing, His yearning love for the sinful and His conflicts with the powers of darkness, His displays of power and of grace—all these stood in direct relation to His one supreme work of redemption. His life, without His sufferings and death, would have brought us no actual deliverance. Everything that Jesus did as a teacher and benefactor attains its divinely-appointed end only in His death. Everything points to the cross. In this sense all the earthly labors of Jesus are a preparation for His

death. And again, in the sufferings and death of Jesus His whole life is concentrated and included as in a summary. The obedience with which He always fulfilled the will of the Father is here tested to the uttermost. The saving love which He manifested toward the children of men is here seen in its perfection. The self-forgetful devotion with which He served His brethren here reaches its culmination as He offers up His life for them. The holy zeal with which He ever sought the salvation of souls, His struggles with the powers of temptation, the overwhelming earnestness of His teaching—are all crowded together in these last hours. Where is the majesty of Jesus more impressively manifested, where does the glory of His spotless life shine more brightly than when, standing before the Roman governor, He makes the "good confession" on account of which He has endured all the mockery and contumely of the world? Where can we look more deeply into the heart of Jesus—His humility, His consciousness of royalty, His steadfast trust in God—than when He is hanging upon the cross with the thorn-crown on His brow? Thus His sufferings and death are the summary of His life, His cross the best compendium of the Gospel history.

In the preaching of the apostles, also, from which the Creed was derived, the testimony to the death of Jesus stands just as distinctly in the foreground. That Jesus "died for our sins according to the scriptures" (1 Cor. 15 : 3) and that He redeemed us with His precious blood (1 Peter 1 : 19)—in this great testimony all the many and various doctrinal utterances of the New Testament writers unite. "I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ and him crucified," writes Paul as he looks back upon his missionary labors in Corinth. And when he desires to condense the entire sub-

stance of the glad tidings which he was sent to proclaim into one brief, comprehensive expression, he selects the significant phrase, "the word of the cross." To him this tells all. In it is embraced the whole Gospel of Jesus. If our Creed, therefore, in its most ancient form contented itself with the presentation of the *one* great fact, that Jesus was "crucified under Pontius Pilate," it in doing so faithfully followed the method pursued by the apostles in their teaching. The later addition, "dead," does not add anything new to the earlier statement, but only serves to develop it a little more fully. In view of the spreading of the false doctrine, that the death of Jesus was only apparent, it was found necessary to expressly emphasize the fact that He not only bore the agonies of crucifixion, but also drank to its dregs the bitter cup of death and really died upon the cross. This is a truth most essential to the Christian faith, for it is only in the death of Jesus that the redeeming work entrusted to Him by God attains its final realization. This end is not attained merely because Jesus has suffered all that it was possible to suffer, and accomplished the most difficult task, but because He made Himself subject to the penalty of death which was resting upon the human race on account of its sin. Only in this way could He become our Reconciler. And there can be no doubt that Jesus Himself saw in His sacrificial death the decisive act and the real consummation of His redemptive mission. The solemn and significant way in which He speaks of the "hour" of His death and refers to the "baptism" which He must yet receive; the seriousness with which He asserts the divine "must" which hovers over the bloody termination of His earthly life, and the calm and resolute determination with which He, despite all temptations, presses forward to the goal, make it very evident that in

the death of Jesus we are to find, not only the crowning point of His ministry and the necessary termination of His earthly life, but the act in which the atonement rendered by Him for the sin of the world reaches the point of actual accomplishment. Only as He was dying could He utter the shout of triumph, "It is finished!"

It is true that the Creed contains no direct statement as to the redeeming efficacy of the death of Christ. It permits the facts of the sacred history to speak for themselves, without making any kind of theological comments as to the "How?" or attempting to describe the personal religious experiences which individual believers may continuously have in view of these events. This has also been considered by some as a defect in the symbol. But how unfounded is this objection! On the contrary, it maintains its character as a general ecclesiastical confession by the very fact that it contents itself with the simple, plain recital of the great deeds of God in Christ, upon which the faith of the whole Christian Church of all ages rests as upon an unchangeable foundation. It might be reserved for a later age to amplify its confession and fortify it against variant doctrinal tendencies by explanatory clauses; but our most ancient confession regards it as its only task to bear testimony to the sufferings and death of Jesus as a veritable fact of history. It is for this very reason that we are expressly reminded that this event occurred under the well-known historical personality, Pontius Pilate. But, on the other hand, the Creed does not fail to give distinct prominence to the fact that the death of Jesus was for our salvation; for it will be observed that every separate statement of the second article is embraced in the great first clause, "I believe in Jesus Christ, our Lord." Because He suffered and died for us as our Redeemer, therefore the Church

of the redeemed confesses Him as her Lord, in whom she places her confidence. And by the words, "I believe," the relation of these redemptive facts to each believer's individual sense of reconciliation is set forth.

The above reflections are of decisive importance, as they put us upon our guard against the error of locating the atoning element in the redemptive work of Christ in any material act, as though any single act of Jesus, in itself considered, any deed of His life, or the mere experience of His sufferings and death constituted, on account of the actual value to be attributed to it, a merit before God and had significance as a satisfaction. The plain language of the Creed leads us to a different understanding of the matter. The words, "suffered, crucified, dead," do not constitute in themselves an article of faith, but they are most intimately connected with "Jesus Christ, our Lord," to which the declaration, "I believe," points. For faith, in the complete sense of the New Testament, does not rest in events as such, but clings alone to the Person who was crucified for us. The deeds and sufferings of Jesus became a means of atonement only through the fact that they are manifestations of His personal life, acts of this Person, Christ. Since it is the God-appointed Mediator of salvation who performs this deed and dies this death, and since He accomplishes this work in such a way as He does, and as only He could have done, therefore does His deed have value in the sight of God and inure to the salvation of the human race. "I believe in Jesus Christ as the One crucified for us." He Himself in His own Person is "the propitiation for our sins." (1 John 2 : 2.) Redemption depends solely upon Him. (Eph. 1 : 7; Col. 1 : 14.)

It requires only a glance at the Gospel history to gain a clear view of the personal activity of Jesus for the

salvation of men. In the "for us" we find the key to the interpretation of His whole life, sufferings and death. How plainly we can see it! For our benefit He became man; for our sakes He became poor among the poor, little among the least. He lives only for the children of men. In the consciousness of entire solidarity with them, as well in view of what they have to do as in view of what they have to suffer, He makes their cause thoroughly His own, lives Himself thoroughly into their misery, sinks Himself entirely into their needs, even into the uttermost distress of their sin and guilt. When Jesus heals the sick, He endures their sickness. When He interests Himself in the sinful, He feels their sins as a burden of His own. When He sheds tears over Jerusalem, her guilt and judgment are weighing upon His own heart. It is very significant that the first evangelist (Matt. 8 : 17) sees in Jesus the fulfillment of the prophecy of Isaiah: "He hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows," at a time when He was yet engaged in the midst of His active ministry. Thus the entire life of Jesus is a redemptive interposition on behalf of men because it was a loving self-surrender to men. But this self-surrender finds its consummation only in His death. In His death, Jesus does the utmost that love can do. He dies, not for Himself, but for His brethren, dies with the consciousness and the purpose of making atonement for them in death, as their Mediator and Reconciler. He knows Himself called of God "to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many." If He has become in all things like unto His brethren and made all their interests His own, He now subjects Himself also to all the sufferings which were resting upon the race as the consequence of their sin, voluntarily and patiently enters into the penal relationship which for them rightfully existed be-

tween their guilt and its punishment. He tastes the bitterness of the cup of suffering, experiences the terrors of death, endures the frightful torture of a death under disgrace and curse, in holy submission to the judicial will of God. But this death is not for Him a punishment unwillingly endured, but a willing endurance of the punishment due the human race in obedience to the will of His Father.

This sacrifice of the Innocent One was designed by the redeeming love of God. (Rom. 5 : 8; 1 John 4 : 10.) He surrenders the Son to the world and its wickedness, that it may do its worst to Him. God withholds from Him the vision and comfort of His helpful presence. He does not interfere when the hands of evildoers are laid upon His beloved Child, upon whom even now His holy approbation rests. Hence the outcry of the Tortured One, who in the gathering shades of death could not find the hand of God. "Yet it pleased Jehovah to bruise him." (Isa. 53 : 10.) It pleased Him, in order that upon this cross sin might be revealed in all its enormity as sin, i.e., as opposition to God; and, furthermore, in order that it might in this, His Holy One, be condemned and forever done away with. It does not overpower Him nor alienate Him from God; but it must serve to make manifest to all the world that He could preserve to the end His obedience to the Father and His love for the children of men. (Phil. 2 : 8; Heb. 5 : 8, 9.) In this way the death of Christ has become a perfect atoning sacrifice for the sin of the world. God has in Christ reconciled the world unto Himself and removed the guilt which rested upon it; for in Christ are embraced, as one body in the eyes of God, all those who attach themselves to Him in faith and come to God through Him. This makes it possible for God also to deal

with them all in Christ and graciously to impute the obedience of the One to them all. In Christ, God looks graciously upon them and transfers them to the happy condition of reconciliation with Himself. The relation of God to the race has, therefore, by the death of Jesus become an essentially different one. This One offers to God in His own person a guarantee of the establishment of a new community of human beings acceptable in His sight, just as He also in His own person furnishes to men a guarantee of the grace of God, which, for the sake of this One, will no longer cast out the most abandoned sinner.

This is the blessed Glad Tidings which the cross of Jesus proclaims to us. It is still operative to-day, and still proves its power as in the days of the apostles when it was first announced in the world. We would cut out the central page of the Gospel if we were to omit the confession of the sufferings and death of Jesus. As long as there are human hearts that, under the burden of their guilt and the hard reality of sin, yearn for forgiveness and salvation; as long as distressed consciences cry out of the depths, "Whither shall we fly to find a resting place," so long will be heard also the prayer of faith, "To Thee, Lord Christ, alone. Shed has been Thy precious blood, which atones for sin." There is nothing else to comfort and cheer us in the hour of trial but the looking up in faith to the Crucified. To the symbol of His death we look up in the dark night of trouble and adversity, beneath it we would place our couch in the hours of pain and death. And when our senses fail us and the enemy assails the citadel of life, then will we take refuge beneath the triumphant banner of the cross of Jesus, and, looking unto Him, depart in peace.

But if our dying has by His death been transformed

into a blessed journey homeward, so, too, has His resting in the grave sanctified our graves and hallowed them as beds in which to sweetly slumber. The burial of Jesus is expressly mentioned in our Creed, just as Paul has also cited it among the chief articles of Christian teaching. (1 Cor. 15 : 4.) The more the Church found occasion to empasize the reality of the death of Christ in refutal of the Docetic absurdities, the more important it became for her to point to His burial. This serves as indubitable confirmation of His death. But the Church also derives great comfort from the burial of Christ when she carries her own deceased members to the grave. As certainly as our Lord and Head rested for but a little time in the bosom of the earth in order that He might very soon arise to enter upon the life of celestial glory, just as surely does the hope of the resurrection hover above the graves of our dead who have fallen asleep in Him. They rest in the tomb like quiet sleepers until, after a brief slumber, they shall be awakened for the blessed life of eternity.

In immediate connection with the burial of Jesus stands the further declaration, that He "descended into hell." This frequently assailed and greatly misunderstood clause is one of the most recent additions to the Creed. It was not inserted until the fourth century. But the doctrine to which it gives expression reaches back to the earliest days of Christianity and has a distinct basis in the teachings of the New Testament. (Acts 2 : 26ff.; 1 Peter 3 : 19.) According to the simple meaning of the words, it declares no more than that Jesus after His death descended into the realm of the dead, to the place where departed souls await the day of the eternal consummation.* In this sense, the clause is only a

* The Lutheran Church holds the view, based upon her inter-

parallel statement of the preceding "buried." Like the latter, it then serves only to attest the reality and completeness of the actual death of Jesus. As He has shared all experiences with the race of men, and become like them in all points, so also He has not been spared this most profound depth of degradation. While His dead body was lying in the grave, the soul of the deceased descended into the realm of the dead—not, indeed, into "hell," in order there to endure on account of our sins the tortures of the lost, but to the blessed locality of Paradise, to the rest of those who have overcome. (Luke 23 : 43.) Yet this clause is not simply auxiliary to the announcement of the burial of Christ, with no further religious interest attaching to it. There was connected with it already in the earliest days of the Church the idea that Jesus in His state of death was not purely passive, but announced Himself in the power of His living spirit to the departed saints, who were waiting for deliverance, as the Victor over death and hell. This view, traces of which are found also in the New Testament, gives expression to one of the most comforting and inspiring truths of our faith which we cannot afford to overlook. It acknowledges Jesus Christ as the One who is Lord over the living and the dead, the Redeemer of them all. Even to those who had died before His coming to earth He goes as the Deliverer. The benefit of His redeeming work shall extend to them also, in order that He may lead them with Himself out of death to eternal life in the kingdom of the divine glory.

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pretation of the Scripture passages involved, that Christ, in the interval between His burial and resurrection, manifested Himself also to the spirits of the lost. In her usage of the term "hell," or "Hades," in the Creed, she, therefore, includes this idea. Tr.

CHAPTER VII

On the Third Day He Rose Again from the Dead

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I. Christian preaching has been from the first a preaching of the resurrection of Jesus. In its very earliest beginnings it was, indeed, more largely a preaching of the resurrection than of the cross of Christ. The course of development of the disciples themselves, as well as the needs of their Jewish hearers, will account for this. It was only from the open grave of Jesus that the disciples found their way to the cross of their Master, and they by an inner necessity led their first hearers upon the same path. How can one who has died upon the accursed tree be the Messiah?—even the pious in Israel could not answer this question. The awakening of Jesus from death brought the divine reply, and it must, therefore, be first of all attested.

Read but the first Christian sermon preached on earth, that at Pentecost. What had long been known to all as a report, Peter now preached with the power of a divine message demanding faith, namely, that God has awakened from the dead the Christ who was crucified by the leaders of the nation and made Him Lord and Christ. With increasing dismay, in some cases with the gnashing of teeth, the multitude listened, and all who were convinced by the witness to the resurrection became believing Christians. Faith in the Lord rested upon conviction of the reality of the resurrection.

Missionary preaching among the Gentiles necessarily pursued different lines, but even here the testimony to the resurrection, together with the preaching of the death of Christ, formed the principal item in the message delivered. These two articles constituted the central element in the Gospel which Paul brought to the Corinthians, according to his own express testimony: "Died for our sins according to the scriptures, . . . raised on the third day." (1 Cor. 15 : 3, 4.) And it is just in this connection that Paul emphasizes the fact that he has only delivered to others that which he had himself received. It is one of the best attested facts of history that the first Christian Church not only believed in the resurrection of Christ, but regarded it as one of the foundations of its faith—yes, in a definite sense, the sense in which Paul enlarges upon the thought in the further course of the fifteenth chapter of First Corinthians, *the* foundation. If there was no resurrection of Christ, then there is no ground for faith in the forgiveness of sins in Christ, all faith is in vain, and the Corinthians are yet in their sins.

Nor can there be any doubt that the whole primitive Church regarded the resurrection of Jesus as a bodily resurrection. It may, indeed, be very seriously asked whether any clear idea can at any time be connected with the conception of a non-bodily resurrection, but, at all events, the disciples never thought of any other than a bodily resurrection. With a sedulous care that is unmistakable, the Gospel narrative gives prominence to the fact that the appearances of the Lord after the crucifixion were bodily. (Luke 24 : 39; John 20 : 17.) Paul also regarded the matter in the same way. Evidence of this is seen in the way in which, in attestation of his apostleship, he openly places his seeing of the Lord in

the same category as that of the apostles during the earthly life of Jesus. (1 Cor. 9 : 1.) The same conclusion follows from an observation of the manner in which he presents the resurrection of believers as parallel with that of Christ. (Rom. 8 : 11; 1 Cor. 15.) And when, in 1 Cor. 15 : 4, he inserts the burial of the Lord directly between the fact of His death and the miracle of the resurrection, can anyone possibly understand this in any other way than as asserting that the Jesus who died upon the cross and whose body was then laid in the grave arose from this grave?

Paul, indeed, in this very chapter, declares that we must not think of the bodily form to which the deceased life is awakened as a material one, in the sense of our present body, and the Gospels evidently entertain the same view. We should, therefore, not be surprised to find in the accounts given in the Gospels of the appearances of the Risen One features which remove the bodily form of the Lord from subjection to the natural limitations of our material bodies. There certainly remain for us open questions at this as at other points in the Gospel records. But we should distinctly recognize the fact that if the resurrection of Jesus, with His consequent appearance to His disciples, is indeed a reality, then these appearances must of necessity have a certain dual character. Instead of taking offence at this, we would do better to inquire whether we may not rather here learn something in regard to the nature of the glorified body which we expect one day to have as our own. At all events, the difficulties are inherent in the fact itself and it should be self-evident that they should not be made an excuse for the denial of the fact. The first witnesses, who alone saw the Lord, were not led by the dual character of His appearances to doubt their reality. The

Gospel narratives, indeed, make it evident that even they found questions here which they could not answer; but this very fact enhances our confidence in the result, i.e., their immediate and continuous testimony: "The Crucified One is risen."

The Crucified One is risen. This is the absolute certainty by which the disciples were, in the striking language of Peter, "born again unto a living hope." If anyone was ever dead to all hope, it was the disciples after the death of their Master. That they could be once more born again to a living hope is a miracle no less amazing than that of the resurrection itself. But this second miracle, experienced by the disciples, rests upon the former one, the resurrection of the Lord. Just so Paul views it. When he claims for those who are in Christ Jesus nothing less than that for them all things have become new, he has in mind Jesus, who Himself once for all died to sin in order that He might thenceforth enter upon a new life. All that inspires Paul's inner life depends in the last analysis upon the fact that he can to the terrible reality which he sees in the world out of Christ, with triumphant faith, oppose the other certainty: "But now is Christ risen from the dead." Dare we think otherwise? And must we?

II. Must we then to-day surrender the faith of the first disciples in the resurrection? So we are told. No support can, indeed, be found for this demand in any newly-discovered facts. Upon the contrary, the history of the Church of Jesus justifies the Easter faith. Everything in the Church proclaims aloud that the Crucified One is alive. Even those who are unable to appreciate the religious reality which we designate as the Easter faith must find it a matter for serious consideration that the whole Church of Christ has from the beginning to the

present day been filled with strength and courage as it has stood by the open grave. Can this be self-deception? What would then become of our faith in divine providence? It will not do to say that in view of certain claims of other religions the same conclusions might be drawn. In fact, every careful investigation will always make it only the more manifest that none of the analogies which might be cited from other religions really in any possibly comparable way suggest such a question. An association of men which from the third day onward testifies that its Lord who died upon the cross is risen, and persists in this testimony throughout the centuries, and in this testimony is justified by the divine approval—where in all religious history could anything at all similar to this be found?

Certainly no appeal can be taken to the history of the Church to justify the rejection of the Easter faith. With all the more emphasis, however, is it claimed that the advance of scholarship in other departments has made impossible the naïve Easter-faith of the early disciples. It is the progress made in the field of natural science which is here especially had in view. To state the position distinctly, it is held that our knowledge of the fixed laws which control all occurrences makes the recognition of a miracle impossible. Hence it follows that the Easter faith must disappear. This is certainly a very summary way of disposing of the matter. But, in any event, its assault is not only upon the Easter fact, but it raises the question whether this whole theory of the impossibility of the miraculous must not submit to correction in view of the Easter miracle. Uhlhorn at one time, conducting a general investigation of the miraculous, made the issue to depend upon an investigation of the reality of the resurrection of Jesus. In fact, when discussing

the question of miracles, we should inquire much more diligently concerning the reality than concerning the possibility of the miracle in question. Of what avail is all challenging of the possibility if the reality is proved? The assertion of the possibility or impossibility of a thing can never decide the question of its reality. The reality, as a matter of course, renders the final decision as to the possibility. I do not forget, indeed, that in the personal attitude to be assumed by any individual, the theory of the universe which he has espoused will, without doubt, unconsciously play a part. But, in the appraisement of historical material, personal theories must just on this account be rigorously excluded. But how shall the question whether a particular view of the universe can stand the test of reality be decided if it may be decreed in advance just what is reality and what is not? In the criticism of historical material, only historical considerations must be allowed to decide.

But it is precisely such considerations that are supposed to lay the Gospel reports open to the most serious suspicion. Attention is called to the difficulties encountered in deriving from the accounts in the Gospels a consistent conception of the resurrection of Jesus. The discrepancies in the narratives of the evangelists, it is said, had been long ago observed, but our more carefully trained critical judgment is more seriously impressed by them. But we are fully justified in reminding the critics that an entire outward agreement between the various reports would at once awaken the gravest suspicions. At all events, however seriously the difficulties referred to may be regarded, they cannot throw any doubt upon the essential fact that the disciples believed that they saw their Risen Lord. This being the case, our sources furnish no ground for subjecting this fact to any different

tests from those applied in estimating other historical facts. No one would in our day venture to doubt that there were really "appearances" of the Lord to His disciples; but the latter may have been self-deceived, mistaking visionary appearances for the real bodily presence of the Risen One. No ground whatever for such an interpretation can be detected in our sources. To support it, appeal would have to be taken to the dual nature of the appearances of Jesus; but we have already seen that this is perfectly intelligible upon the ground that Jesus arose in a glorified body. Still less does the testimony of Paul afford any point of attachment for such a peculiar critical method. It evidently means to report real personal intercourse with the risen Christ, and it furnishes no possible ground upon which to extract from it, as the real fact in the case, a series of visionary appearances. The attempt may be made to prove, if it be thought possible to do so, that the New Testament tradition of appearances of the risen Saviour is unreliable. But if this be not attempted, it should then be acknowledged that the record furnishes no critical criterion which will really justify the reduction of this positive assertion of repeated personal intercourse with the risen Lord to a consciousness of subjective experiences. There are, however, the best of reasons for freely acknowledging that there were actual appearances of the Lord. Whatever serious misgivings there might be in the minds of any as to the report of the evangelists, the testimony of Paul, at least, cannot be shaken.

The real facts of the case, for the honest investigator, are as follows: Immediately after the death of Jesus, the disciples believed that they had seen Him alive again. This was not the experience of one man, but, according to the testimony of Paul, that of more than five hundred

upon one occasion. If the event were not so unusual and so immense in its significance, who would ever have thought of simply pushing aside such overwhelming evidence? No one would to-day be disposed to cast any suspicion upon the honesty of the disciples. The hypothesis of a willful deception upon their part finds very few and solitary adherents in this age. But it is just as much an error to question the competency of the disciples to render testimony in the case. Even some scholars who do not upon general principles exclude in advance everything miraculous think it necessary to remind us how easily the credulous men of that day might have been misled by an illusion which could not by any possibility deceive us in view of our advanced scientific insight. Such suggestions, in reality, can only serve to confuse a subject infinitely simple, although infinitely great. It requires, really, no extraordinary scientific training to establish the fact for proof of which we look to the disciples. Let it be remembered that they but a few days before had eaten and drunk with this man, that they had been witnesses of His death, and that they knew all about the grave in which His dead body had been placed. Would not these men be in a position to become fully satisfied among themselves whether that grave was empty and whether He who had died on the cross was really alive again, walking and talking with them? One would think that it should be necessary only to transfer the entire series of events in thought to the immediate present to convince the most reluctant that under such circumstances the most simple-minded of men would be in position to reach a reliable conclusion.

At all events, it is evident that the sober testimony of the first disciples cannot be nullified by the suggestion of visionary appearances. Could even the possibility of such

a series of visions in the case of the disciples be seriously entertained? Visions presuppose a certain susceptibility. What trace of such a susceptibility can we detect in the disciples, who were on the preceding Friday in a state of complete collapse? And if it be maintained that their depression had given place to a new hope, how can it be seriously believed that this could be possible within three days? But these three days must be taken into acount. The difficulties inseparable from this theory of subjective visions are so great that there is a disposition in many quarters to surrender it in favor of the so-called theory of objective visions. This assumes various forms. In the general, and certainly the most plausible form, it maintains that God awakened in the disciples the conviction that Jesus was still living, and this conviction embodied itself in visions. This furnishes an answer to the question, how the Easter conviction was awakened in the minds of the disciples—but who cannot see that we are thus only substituting a miracle of which we know nothing for one which has been well attested? Above all, do we not thus make God, who is supposed by His inner influence upon the disciples and the resultant visions to have awakened in their minds the idea of the bodily resurrection of Jesus, the originator of a pious fraud? And upon this, we are asked to believe, rests the Easter conviction, and with it, in the last instance, the Church itself! It is incredible.

Moreover, even if the force of these objections to the theory of visions be not admitted, it could, at best, account for no more than the possibility of their occurrence, and there would still remain a long step to be taken, i.e., from the possibility to the actual fact of their existence. To begin with, it must be admitted to be improbable that these men were really not in a condition to discriminate

between visions and real appearances of their Lord. We know how intimately familiar Paul was with visions and how moderate he was in the estimate placed upon them. (2 Cor. 12 : 1ff.) Peter, too, knew what visions were from his own experience. How, then, could these men have been so utterly deceived in their estimate of the appearance of their risen Lord? And how was it with the five hundred who together saw the Lord? It would be hard enough to imagine how these five hundred could all have had the experience of a vision at the same time; but it would be totally inconceivable that they should all have mistaken this experience for an actual seeing of the Lord and never afterward have discovered their mistake.

But, at all events, to whatever extent liability to self-deception may be attributed to these first witnesses, it must be ever borne in mind that our sources give no countenance whatever to any such theory. On the contrary, it is but fair to say that by the visions-theory their testimony is at the decisive point exactly reversed; for there can be no possible doubt of the fact that for them the Easter conviction was produced solely by the appearances of the Lord. This point, at least, is settled, whatever may be the judgment passed upon the Gospel narratives in other particulars. But this is a direct contradiction of the claims of the visions-theories, which all rest upon the supposition that the disciples were convinced beforehand of the continued existence of Jesus, and that this conviction embodied itself in visions. To state the matter concisely: According to the reports actually given, the appearances of the Lord came first and the Easter-faith of the disciples was the result; in these theories the Easter-faith comes first and the appearances are the result. If anyone wishes to advocate such a view,

let him openly acknowledge that he is dealing only with suggestions made in his own name.

It remains to be noted that the positive conviction of the first disciples has a strong ally in another witness—the open grave. The reference to this is very distasteful to the opponents of the faith of believers in the resurrection, and they would prefer to push aside as an irrelevant matter the question as to the open grave. There is all the more reason on that account why we should not pass it by. No one can overthrow the fact that the grave must have been empty. How easily could not their enemies otherwise have convinced the disciples of the falsity of their testimony! And does anyone seriously believe it possible that the disciples would have ventured to proclaim the resurrection if the grave might have been at any moment summoned as a witness against them? The grave must have been empty. But how did it become so? We have already seen that no one in our day would be disposed to attribute deception to the disciples and friends of Jesus. But their enemies would certainly not first have removed the body and then have kept silent about it. There remains only one other possible explanation, i.e., that some unknown persons for unknown reasons removed the body and then remained perfectly silent when the news of the resurrection was perplexing the minds of all about them. It has been well said that whoever would venture to hang upon this thread the weight of an event of world-wide significance and influence is at liberty to do so.

III. Certain it is that in our day we have no occasion to question the reality of the resurrection. Dare we then fail to emphasize it? To ask the question is to answer it. It must be acknowledged that, even if we could not understand the significance of the resurrection

of Jesus, we would not be at liberty to keep silent in view of the divine glory which is here revealed. But, in reality, we find an echo in our own experience to the assertion of the apostle Paul: Without Easter, no Good Friday; without Easter, no eternal life begun in time; without Easter, no glorious consummation of life in eternity. "But now is Christ risen from the dead."

Easter brings us the first complete assurance of the fact of our reconciliation with God. It is true, the Son of God on Good Friday died with the triumphant announcement, "It is finished." But it was only Easter that brought the divine response. This involves the second great truth: Easter assures us that we have a living Saviour, who is our Advocate before the throne of God; who safely leads His Church by His almighty hand through the scenes of time; and who fills us early with His Spirit in order that we may have life in Him. Easter assures us, finally, of the consummation of all life and the conquest of death. If our Lord is "the firstfruits of them that are asleep," we may find unfailing comfort in His own words, "Because I live, ye shall live also."

In all of this, it must be remembered, we are speaking of a resurrection in the literal sense of the word. Our sources know absolutely nothing of any other, and this alone should be decisive. But we have also the most profound religious interest in the maintenance of this view. We are often, indeed, asked whether it would not have practically the same religious significance for us if we could speak only of a spiritual continuance of the life of Jesus. To this it must be our unvarying reply that our religious interest would thus be imperiled in a threefold way. In the first place and chiefly, any other than a bodily resurrection could never have the power of a historical fact. Whatever it might be thought possible to be-

lieve in regard to a spiritual resurrection, the impressive "It is finished," with which the Son of God entered the realm of death, would thus remain without any divine response in actual history. It is difficult to realize the full force of this consideration. If the denial of the bodily resurrection is seriously meant, nothing then remains except the idea of a continued spiritual existence. Whatever effort may be made to conceal this in various ways, it is in reality an inevitable consequence. But this means that, in the realm of history, the grave has the last word, and the stupendous claim made by Jesus at His death remains unjustified. With this is connected the further thought that we can have no real conception of a continued effectual life of the Man Jesus, if we are to think only of a spiritual existence. This is a matter of very especial importance to us as Lutherans, in view of our conception of the Lord's Supper. Finally, the assurance of the resurrection of our own bodies is manifestly inseparably dependent upon the bodily resurrection of Jesus. But we can no more surrender our hope of the resurrection of our bodies than we can deny that we as human beings consist of body and spirit. This means, therefore, that with the assurance of the bodily resurrection of Jesus must stand or fall the assurance of our own immortal life.

In conclusion, it must be clearly borne in mind that all these attempts to discredit the bodily resurrection of Christ simply ignore the real facts. It is fundamentally impious to be continually asking whether faith might not accommodate itself to another series of facts than those which have been divinely ordained. Such a course can serve only to make us keenly conscious of our own exclusion from all hope of future blessedness. It may, indeed, even here still be asked whether our life is, after

all, so dependent upon bodily existence. In reply to this, many things might be said, but it is amply sufficient to observe that the question is equivalent to an inquiry whether man might not have been differently made. But as certainly as our nature is both bodily and spiritual, so surely can we never cease to live through the sure fact of the bodily resurrection of Jesus. As men, such as God designed us to be, we know that we have been born again to a living hope.

With this conviction, we continue to confess with reverence and gratitude, "Rose again from the dead." *

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*For a more detailed statement of the above arguments, see the work of the same author, "Die Auferstehung Jesu Christi," 3d edition, 1913.

CHAPTER VIII

He Ascended into Heaven, and Sitteth on the Right Hand of God, the Father Almighty

By Dr. A. Schlatter

PROFESSOR OF NEW TESTAMENT EXEGESIS AT TUEBINGEN

With the words of Psalm 110, "Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool," Jesus approached the cross. He accepted these words as written for Himself, to show Him the Father's will concerning Himself, and present vividly to Him the goal which God had set before Him. Man rejects Him; God takes Him to Himself. Earth is closed to Him; heaven is opened before Him. The chosen people condemn Him as a sinner; God shares His throne with Him. He was sure of this as He lifted the cross, for there was no uncertainty in His mind as to the will of God. As He had said to His disciples when ambitious to sit upon the throne, "It is for them for whom it hath been prepared of my Father," and thus led them to the certainty and peace of faith, so did He also grasp with complete assurance the promise which designated the seat in heaven as His goal. He calmly said, "I leave the world, and go unto the Father."

Thus these words of the Creed are but an echo of the testimony which Jesus gave of Himself. They do not form an invention of the Church or a doctrine of the apostles, but repeat a saying of Jesus Himself, and, in doing so, conform to the rule which must be inviolably

observed in framing a confession for the Church, i.e., that we are not to invent a confession to suit our own fancy, nor to write fables nor deal in mythology, but are to receive our confession from Jesus, and confess in regard to Him what He has confessed of Himself. If we consider the history of Jesus, the certainty of Jesus, the will of Jesus, the acts of Jesus, we will be convinced that it is a perfectly sure reality, just as imperishable and indisputable as any other portion of history, that He who died is the same who ascends to heaven and sits at the right hand of God. Our eyes, indeed, cannot see beyond the earthly history of Jesus, beyond what He Himself did up to the moment of His death. If the history of Jesus lays hold upon us, stirs our hearts and dominates our own history—if we are so impressed by His testimony that it furnishes us not only a historical reminder, but our confession, this is more than perception—it is faith; more than a thesis of scholarship—it is the confession of His believing Church.

Will we deny Him our confidence, and in reply to His testimony declare that He was misled by a delusion and unbalanced by a dream when He imagined that He knew whither He was going? Can we do so? We, who bear within us the words of Jesus which call us to communion with God, separate us from our sinful will, and make us obedient to the divine love—we, who follow Him to the cross and there see how He, in subjection to the justice of God and in furtherance of His glorious grace becomes our Redeemer—we will not turn away from Him when He directs our gaze toward heaven as the place to which He is going, but will repeat His testimony as our own confession with joyful assurance and adoration.

This was the view of the disciples of Jesus, and they

proclaimed His words as the message of the Lord who had ascended from the earth to heaven. This is not the peculiar teaching of a single apostle, but the common conviction of them all, and the foundation upon which rests the entire doctrine of the Christian Church. If we were to depart from the Creed at this point, acknowledging Jesus as the Christ, our Lord, who was begotten of the Holy Ghost, crucified and risen again, but there break off the confession and leave it uncertain where we are now to look for Him and what is the nature of His present relation to us, we would utterly shatter our confession of allegiance to Him, and all the reminders of the history of Jesus which we possess would lose their significance. The attainment of the goal proves that the path has been a straight one and the method of reaching it the proper one.

It was only because the disciples were so sure that Jesus was in heaven that they did not turn their eyes from His death, but directed the gaze of men upon the cross as the place where the glory of God was most strikingly revealed. It is a strange fact, indeed, and may well occasion the most profound astonishment, that the cross, standing in the midst of the world's history, should have become the revelation of perfect and divine love. How can the work of God be seen in the death of Jesus and His cross make manifest the grace of God? The answer is: He passed by means of the cross to the throne of God. Because of this, and because of this alone, it reveals to us, not the law which decrees that death shall be the penalty of guilt, but that righteousness of God through which His grace becomes our portion. Because of this, and because of this alone, the death of Jesus becomes an effectual transaction of the Priest who reconciles us to God.

This same conviction pervades and fills also the Easter proclamation of the apostles. Realizing that Jesus still lives, they know at once that He lives not for Himself, and that He has not arisen from the dead in order that He may be immortal and blessed and glorified, but that He lives for us, for His Church, for the human race, for all—lives, therefore, as our Redeemer, Saviour and Lord, through whose fellowship we have fellowship with God. Thus there sprung from the Easter history the Gospel, from the sight of the Risen Lord, the faith which holds, as a precious possession, redemption and justification and sanctification. How can this be explained? He lives: this proves with absolute certainty that He lives in God. He lives, therefore, not only for Himself, since He lives by God and for God. (Rom. 6 : 10.) If He lives with God, then He lives also for all who are God's. United with God, He is associated with the whole work and the whole kingdom of God and lives for us. Therefore the first Easter Day became the day of the world's redemption, the hour when the religion which is not contention against God, but fellowship with God, was born.

This purpose of Jesus and this certainty of the disciples are brought into clear light by the fact that the Risen Lord brought His last interview with His followers to a close by for their sakes ascending visibly until the cloud received Him out of their sight. Luke has thus plainly indicated both the goal to which the earthly work of Jesus led Him and the foundation upon which the labors of the apostles rested. And the manner in which the Easter history closed must certainly have powerfully aided the disciples in realizing that Jesus was, beyond all doubt or fear, at the right hand of God. Our experiences beget our convictions, and even a single event may, therefore, go far toward fixing an opinion in our

minds. But we would have read the accounts of Jesus given by the disciples, and even that of Luke, very carelessly if we should imagine that it is only the history of the ascension, as related by Luke, which attests the presence of Jesus with God. A single event could never produce faith if it remained a solitary occurrence and was out of harmony with that which preceded and followed. Only when an occurrence is bound by a firm chain to earlier and later events, thus constituting a consistent historical episode, does it afford a basis for the clear recognition and positive judgment which produce faith. Because the disciples of Jesus observed that in departing He extended His hands over them in blessing, they believed in His imperishable grace. But they thus believed, not only because of His benignant attitude, but because the last attitude in which they beheld Him at His departure was in full harmony with all that His association with them had attested and His cross made possible, and with all that they had in their subsequent lives received from Him through the fellowship of the Spirit, which brought to them in exhaustless fullness daily supplies of grace. It was in this way that the visible ascension of Jesus to heaven powerfully aided in assuring the disciples that He was still in heaven; but it had this power, not as a separate occurrence, but because they had in His previous association with them learned that He was in the Father and the Father in Him, because they saw in their intercourse with the Risen Lord that God had given Him a life for which there was no room on earth, and because they in their subsequent lives discovered from the way in which He led them, inwardly and outwardly, built up His Church, and accomplished His gracious will concerning them, that He was living in full communion with the Father. The objection some-

times urged, that the ascension of Jesus is related only by Luke, cannot, therefore, interfere with our continued confidence in the Creed. That Luke relates it, proves that the thoughts of the disciples continually recurred to the last moment when Jesus was visible to them, and confirmed their faith in Him by recalling the manner of His departure. And from the fact that no other evangelist relates it, it is evident that the disciples did not at this moment for the first time by a sudden enlightenment grasp the idea that Jesus was going to God, nor was it this sight alone which fixed that idea so firmly in their minds; but that this was the conviction which Jesus always cherished and which shone through all His intercourse with His disciples both before and after His death upon the cross.

This may enable us to understand the mental attitude of the disciples as they look upward toward heaven as the place where Jesus now lives, and it is important that we should appreciate their attitude in order that our own conception of the confession which we make may be kept in harmony with that which these witnesses have made.

They announce to us that the path of Jesus did not end in darkness, that He did not vanish without making it possible for our glance to follow Him and for us to know where He is and what He is. This, and this alone, is their message to us. It remains, therefore, far removed from every approach to the attitude of Gnosticism. Their upward glance resting upon their exalted Lord does not impel them to give us a description of heaven and describe the site which has now been assigned to Jesus as His place. The message, "Jesus is in heaven," is rather an earnest reminder that here our thoughts must end in silence and not venture to accompany Him into His glory, just as little as they dare attempt to describe

God in His celestial character. The way in which Luke describes the departure of Jesus teaches us the same lesson, as the glance of the disciples is not permitted to follow Jesus, as in prophetic rapture, to where heaven is opened to receive Him, the spirits in glory come to welcome Him, and He ascends the throne of God; but it can follow Him only to the point at which the clouds conceal Him from their view. With this all the utterances of the Epistles as to the glorified nature of Christ and His presence in heaven are in perfect accord. We have nowhere any suggestion approaching the character of a topography of heaven. When John, speaking as a prophet, sets before us a picture, painted in vivid colors, representing Jesus as the Lamb upon the throne of God (Rev. 4 and 5), it awakens in our minds no conjectures peering with eager curiosity into heaven. Such a vision never implies that heaven has now been explored and a knowledge gained of the place where Jesus lives; for he who utters and those who receive the prophecy are both perfectly aware that the prophet is speaking figuratively. Paul, indeed, was granted a peculiar proof of the nearness of Jesus, being "caught up even to the third heaven"; but this does not affect the severe simplicity of his utterances concerning heaven, which avoid all attempt to reveal its secrets or to so misuse the idea of the ascension of Jesus as to concern himself about heaven itself apart from God and apart from Christ.

This reveals most clearly and impressively how completely Jesus directed the love of His disciples upon its central and only goal—upon the Father, who grants them in the Son fellowship with Himself. He taught them to love their Father's house because it was the house of the Father, not for the sake of its walls and roof. Because heaven is the place where God dwells, and only for this

reason, is the announcement that Jesus is in heaven a part of the apostolic Gospel and of the Church's Creed. We say no more in the Creed than, "He is with God"; but this we say with grateful joy.

It follows that the scornful taunt of those who challenge us to point out in the firmament the place to which Jesus has gone, and remind us that we cannot surround space with a wall, and that there is, therefore, no place left for heaven, falls very wide of the mark. Such questions spring from a shallow curiosity which would discover where God is, and which, disassociating our conception of heaven from the thought of God's presence, would give to it an independent meaning. As to the amazing miracle, that space can have no bounds, the natural scientists may speak if they desire. The confession of the Church has nothing to do with the question. When we speak of the Ascension, we think not of the stars and their inconceivable distances, nor of the infinity of nature, but alone of God. Hence heaven vanishes only for him for whom God has disappeared, and the ascension of Jesus becomes a myth only for him to whom Christ, the Son of God, has become a myth.

Are we then speaking foolishly when we speak of the place where God is? Certainly we are, for we are speaking humanly, in accordance with the necessity imposed upon us by the nature of the consciousness which limits our conceptions and from which we cannot escape. We cannot form any idea from which the conception of space is excluded, not even the idea of God, although we know that we dare not make the Creator like the creature. The space in which we live gives us form and law; God is not made by space, but makes space. But just because our mode of speech is human, it is right and necessary. We should not wish to speak in a superhuman way, nor

make the attempt to escape from the limitations of our consciousness. That would lead only to phantasy and delusion. We willingly yield to the compulsion which the law of our inner life imposes upon us, because we honor it as appointed by God, and we, therefore, speak of space even when thinking of God and anticipate that this necessity, arising from our natural, though God-appointed human state, denotes a mystery the glory of which we shall clearly see when the promise of Jesus, that we shall be with Him, shall have been fulfilled in us.

Since God reveals Himself in the life and glory of His creatures, heaven is further revealed as the dwelling-place of God by the fact that it is the abode of His glorious spirits, and we, with the apostles, think also of these when we speak of the ascension of Jesus. (1 Peter 3 : 22; Eph. 1 : 20, 21; Col. 1 : 16.) Jesus stands in alliance not only with the human race, but also with the spirits above; and His royal office embraces not only our human history, but also the invisible world. Hence, because in our thoughts of heaven we think also of those who serve God perfectly, we add to the words, "ascended into heaven," the further defining clause, "Sitteth on the right hand of God the Father." We thus endeavor to express in our figurative human language the complete fellowship by which the Father unites Jesus with Himself. There is no one between Christ and God. We thus confess our belief in the completeness of His divine Sonship: At the right hand of the Father sits the only Son.

This we do not believe, and ought not to believe, so long as the divine Sonship of Jesus is concealed for us in His human works. If we assign to Jesus a place by our side and attribute to Him a participation in our separation from God, even though with the ardent long-

ing which hungers for God but by that very fact gives evidence that we are living in an unreconciled state, then we cannot say, "Sitteth at the right hand of God." But it is possible for us to see the divine Sonship of Jesus—so to see it that we believe it, and can understand that God is through it calling us—and then we can joyfully confess, "Sitteth at the right hand of God." We then speak not of a half-fellowship of God with Him, nor of a limited love of the Father which does not bestow all upon the Son; but we honor the will of God in its perfection, free from all partial work, and, therefore, recognize Jesus as having no one above Him but the Father, and the Father above Him in such a way that He exalts Him to Himself. The unfathomable mystery of the perfected fellowship stands before us. It is our last view—the summit of our knowledge. Now we bow in silence and adore.

If we confess this, it will determine the character of our faith and thus also of our entire lives. Jesus is in heaven; this leads to our positive subjection under Him and marks the end of all comradeship with Him, the rejection of every kind of fellowship which would drag Him down to a level with ourselves. Because He is in heaven, we do not divide our confidence between Him and ourselves, but turn it entirely away from ourselves, repose it in Him alone, and seek our righteousness not in ourselves but in Him. Because He is in heaven, there is due to Him an obedience which unhesitatingly surrenders our own will and a love that thinks not of ourselves, but lives for Him, alone for Him.

But the same confession which so clearly expresses the difference separating us from Jesus announces, at the same time His alliance with us and the completeness of the blessings which He bestows upon us, which time can-

not diminish nor opposition destroy. The Saviour in heaven pardons us; His pardon is, therefore, our righteousness in eternal truth. The Saviour in heaven gives us His word; therefore the entrance of His word into our souls is the reception of the Spirit, since the heavenly Saviour lives and speaks in the Spirit. The Saviour in heaven bids us believe in Him; therefore our faith is certainty and beyond the reach of care, for the heavenly Saviour will carry His work to completion. The Saviour in heaven awakens our love; therefore it will never cease. The gaze of our love directed upon Him cannot falter; for we can never exhaust the fullness of the heavenly Saviour. The service of our love can never end; for His will, which assigns us our tasks, will ever impel us anew. The adoration of our love cannot be silenced; for His glory never grows dim. Because He is at the right hand of God, He works in God's way and rules with God's dominion, which embraces the whole creation and every separate part of it, the great and the small. When we confess that He is in heaven, we thereby acknowledge His presence on earth, extending to everyone of us.

CHAPTER IX

From Thence He Shall Come to Judge the Quick and the Dead

By Dr. G. Wohlenberg

PROFESSOR OF NEW TESTAMENT EXEGESIS AT ERLANGEN

Thus closes the second article of the Creed with an incomparable impressiveness and power, manifest in the very cadence of the language. Two leading thoughts are here presented: First, that He, the Son of God, risen and ascended to the right hand of God, will come from heaven—come again, i.e., to the place from which He ascended; and, second, that He will come for the purpose of holding judgment, and that both over those who may then be living and over those who will have been for a longer or shorter time in the state of the dead.

I. As to the time when this shall occur, the Creed says nothing. Longingly as the primitive Church awaited the advent of Christ in glory, fervently as they prayed for it, near as they positively or conditionally thought it to be, they yet admitted to the Creed no syllable as to the time, no indication how long their Master in heaven would withhold from them His visible presence and withdraw Himself into the depths of the divine nature, as Moses tarried on Mount Sinai after the giving of the law, hidden from the view of the people and leaving them to themselves. In this we have another evidence of spiritual tact, of an amazing power of discrimination. The *fact* of the second coming of the Lord was for them

immovably established, and must also be absolutely and without exception confessed by all who would join their company. The *time* when it should occur they, mindful of the prophecies of the Lord (e.g., Matt. 24 : 36, 42ff; 25 : 5, 6, 13, 19; Acts 1 : 7) and under the guidance of the Spirit, left entirely to the power and wisdom of God.

Within the past hundred years it has been frequently maintained that the fourth evangelist sought to supersede the plastic and popular view of the personal second coming of Christ by presenting an ideal, spiritual conception of the Parousia. The Jesus of the Gospel of John, it is said, knows only of an invisible coming of the glorified Son of God, of a visit to His followers in the Holy Spirit, of a purely immanent development of His purely spiritual kingdom, and locates the final judgment in the present, in the inner life of the individual believer. It is remarkable that the painter of this portrait of Jesus, despite the bold and even revolutionary character of the undertaking, accomplished nothing by the attempt, and, still more remarkable that the Church of his day took no notice whatever of it. It must, in fact, be regarded as a gross misunderstanding, when Jesus, as reported in the Gospel of John, is thought to have known nothing and said nothing of a Parousia in keeping with the prevalent expectation of the Church. It may be granted that certain utterances in the Saviour's farewell address are couched in general terms, from which might be deduced that erroneous interpretation of the fourth Gospel according to which the coming of Jesus to His own is always identical with that of the Paraclete promised by Him. But careful exegesis will scarcely venture to interpret such a promise as, "I will not leave you desolate; I come unto you" (14 : 18), in any other way than as an advance upon the idea of an endowment with the Spirit

of truth (v. 16); nor will it be able to explain as finding their fulfillment in the resurrection of Jesus the declarations: "Yet a little while, and the world beholdeth me no more; but ye behold me. . . . I will manifest myself unto him" (i.e., that loveth me). . . . "We will come unto him and make our abode with him (not *in* him)" (vs. 19ff.) "A little while, and ye behold me no more; and again a little while , and ye shall see me" (16 : 16). . . . "I will see you again, and your hearts shall rejoice, and your joy no one taketh away from you. And in that day ye shall ask me no question" (22, 23). . . . "In that day ye shall ask in my name: and I say not unto you, that I will pray the Father for you; for the Father himself loveth you, because ye have loved me, and have believed that I came forth from the Father" (26, 27). But, however these passages may be explained, what can be made of the words of Jesus: "I come again, and will receive you unto myself"? And does not the author of the fourth Gospel report Jesus as saying: "All that are in the tombs shall hear his voice and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of judgment"? And does not the same author in his first Epistle speak of the time when Jesus shall be revealed, of His Parousia, and of a future perfecting of the children of God by virtue of which they shall be like Him when they shall see Him as He is?

But that the Jesus of the synoptic Gospels spoke repeatedly and unambiguously of a real and personal return upon His part, cannot easily be denied. This is, indeed, a distressing burden upon the hearts of those who are so anxious to discover and acknowledge a Jesus who, as a historical personage, shall be free from all objections. But they will not succeed either in showing that the

prophecies of Jesus as to His return are, one and all, ungenuine, mere figments of the imagination of the primitive Church which put them into His mouth, nor in their attempt, by diluting these utterances or reducing them to a vanishing minimum of eschatological ideas, which Jesus entertained only toward the close of His earthly life, when He was Himself perhaps groping His way in uncertainty, to depict a Jesus who might be more intelligible to our reason and more acceptable to our generation than the ancient "doctrinal" Jesus. But we have not been accustomed to observe such uncertainty at any other point in His career. And how should such a Jesus, who, finding at the end of His earthly life that His work was not progressing as He had hoped, conceived as a resource the bold idea of a return in glory, be more intelligible or more acceptable to us? The theory does not escape, but makes the more inevitable, the dreadful alternative: Either a lunatic or the God-man!

As truly great men gain wider experience and approach the end of life, their judgment generally becomes more mature and sober, and they are the more ready to detect and acknowledge, especially with respect to themselves, the limits of human ability. And shall we suppose that Jesus, in the very last days or weeks before His death upon the cross, deluded Himself and His disciples with these vain hopes?

II. But let us leave these undervaluations of our Christian faith, and turn our attention upon the truth immediately before us. Jesus is the future Judge, the Judge of the whole world. Here, too, we find two interwoven thoughts. That a righteous judgment shall at some time be pronounced upon all men, is an idea of which we find distinct traces also in other religions, and especially in Israel had the thought of a future judgment, to be con-

ducted by Jehovah for both Jew and Gentile, become so much a part of their very flesh and blood that there was no question of it among pious Israelites. (Rom. 3 : 5f.) But it is a peculiar feature of the doctrine in our Creed that it associates the conducting of the last judgment with the person of the returning Lord Jesus Christ. In this also it moves entirely within the lines of New Testament utterances falling from the lips of Jesus Himself and His apostles,—even of His forerunner; whereas in the Old Testament it is Jehovah Himself who conducts the judgment. John the Baptist declares of the mightier One who should come after him that He will baptize with Spirit and fire, i.e., with the fire of the judgment; that the fan of the word is in His hand; that He will thoroughly cleanse His threshing-floor, and that He will gather His wheat into the garner, but the chaff He will burn up with unquenchable fire. The Messiahship of the coming divine Messenger and His executive judicial authority are, to the mind of John, inseparably united.

In illustration of the teachings of Christ Himself upon the subject, we need cite but a few passages. In the conclusion of the Sermon on the Mount, He represents Himself as making His final decision in the case of each individual dependent not only, though in part, upon whether he has with the mouth acknowledged Him as "Lord, Lord!", nor whether he has in His name displayed charismatic gifts; but, above all, upon whether He has fulfilled the will of His heavenly Father in His moral and religious life. But it is then He Himself who will say to the hypocritical: "I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity." How majestic, though simply blasphemous on the lips of an ordinary mortal, the words recorded by Matthew: "The Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then shall

he render unto every man according to his deeds!" In view of His tragic departure, He declares that terrible catastrophes, embracing also the powers of nature, shall occur as premonitions of the end, "And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory." And when He speaks of a gathering of His elect from the four winds of heaven into His kingdom, what is this but another mode of expressing the thought of judgment? His Parousia will find men in a condition like that in the days of Noah, and a separation shall then be made. One shall be taken and the other left. How distinct the prophecy: "The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that cause stumbling, and them that do iniquity, and shall cast them into the furnace of fire. There shall be the weeping and the gnashing of teeth. Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father." And how solemn the warning: "Watch therefore: for ye know not when the Lord of the house cometh." The entire prophecy in the twenty-fourth and twenty-fifth chapters of Matthew must be read in connection. The discourse of our Lord rises from the description of the divine judgment which is to be visited upon Jerusalem, of the various distressing trials which shall befall the Church, of the great final tribulation, to the Last Judgment, which He shall Himself conduct. This shall occur after a period when many of His servants shall have given themselves over to frivolity because the time of waiting is too long for them, and they say, "Our Lord tarrieth"; and these wicked servants will be destroyed and receive their portion with the hypocrites. The summons to all is to be wise and faith-

ful. Otherwise there can be no admission to the marriage-supper of the Lord. A distinction appears to be made between the judgment to be pronounced upon those who know and serve Him and the general judgment in which He Himself, the Son of man, will from the throne of His glory judge all nations (i.e., those who are not Chrisians); and those who, without accounting it or desiring it to be considered as a great thing, have shown kindness to the disciples of Jesus will, as the blessed of His Father, enter into the kingdom prepared for them from the foundation of the world, whilst those who have neglected such works of love shall be committed to the eternal fire.

Although Jesus represents Himself as the Judge, yet He did not mean thus to identify Himself with God. He knows that God has given over the judgment to Him as the Son of man. The Father judges through the Son. The conducting of the judgment belongs to Him as the executor of the divine plan of salvation. We thus find emphasis laid in the apostolic writings of the New Testament upon both declarations, i.e., that God judges and that Christ judges. Thus, in Rom. 14 : 9-12, we read: "For to this end Christ died and lived again, that he might be Lord of both the dead and the living. But thou, why dost thou judge thy brother? or thou again, why dost thou set at naught thy brother? For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of God. For it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, to me every knee shall bow, and every tongue shall confess to God. So then each one of us shall give account of himself to God." According to the testimony of many important manuscripts, we should in this passage read, "the judgment seat of *Christ*." This is the more probable as in the preceding verse 9 the subject was the universal dominion of

Christ (compare Phil. 2 : 10f), and in verse 8 no other than Christ can be meant when the apostle speaks of the Lord to whom we live, to whom we die, and whose we are. At all events, Paul wrote to the Corinthians: "We must all be made manifest before the judgment-seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, whether it be good or bad." It is the Lord Jesus Christ Himself who on the "day of the Lord" at His Parousia shall slay the man of sin, the son of perdition, the adversary of Himself and of God, with the Spirit (or, rather, the breath) of His mouth and bring him to naught by the manifestation of His coming. (2 Thes. 2 : 8.) But, on the other hand, when we read of His "revelation from heaven" (2 Thes. 1 : 7), we are doubtless to understand that God will reveal Him and send Him forth as Judge. (Compare Heb. 1 : 6; 1 Peter 1 : 13; 5 : 4; Luke 17 : 30.) Paul gives the Corinthians to understand, in view of their unbecoming and untimely criticising and judging of their teachers, especially of himself, that it is for him "a very small thing" that he should be judged of them or of man's judgment: "He that judgeth me is the Lord. Wherefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come (i.e., Christ), who will both bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and make manifest the counsels of the hearts." It is to Him, Christ, that Paul and his fellow-laborers are accountable. For they are servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God, and it is from God, and not from men, that due praise will come to every faithful servant on the judgment day. Again, we read in 2 Tim. 4 : 1: "I charge thee in the sight of God, and of Christ Jesus, who shall judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom." And as we are told, in Rom. 2 : 11, that there is no respect of persons with God, so masters re-

ceive the admonition to do that which is just and proper to their servants, forbearing threatening, since they know "that he who is both their Master and yours is in heaven, and there is no respect of person with him" (i.e., according to the context, none other than Christ). The apostle expresses himself still more definitely in Rom. 2 : 16, when he, in view of the accusing or excusing thoughts of the hearts of men, transports himself and his readers to the day when "God shall judge the secrets of men, according to my gospel, by Jesus Christ." In perfect accord with this, Paul declares with compact brevity at Athens: "The times of ignorance therefore God overlooked, but now he commandeth men that they should all everywhere repent: inasmuch as he hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness by the man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead." (Acts 17 : 30f.; compare also Acts 10 : 42; 1 Peter 4 : 5.)

Nor do we find anything different in the Revelation of John. The Lord, the almighty God, who was, and is, and is to come, before whom the heavenly hosts cry, "Holy, holy, holy," is discriminated from the Lamb, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Branch out of the root of David. True, He who is represented by the Lamb—Jesus Christ, the faithful Witness, the Firstborn from the dead, the Prince among the kings upon the earth—belongs entirely upon an equality with God the Creator of the world; for to both, to Him that sitteth upon the throne and to the Lamb, is rendered the same royal homage. But it is Christ who appears to sit in judgment. He comes seated upon a white cloud, "like unto a Son of man, having on his head a golden crown and in his hand a sharp sickle." And at the command of an

angel, i.e., by direction of God, who employs an angel for the execution of His purpose, He casts this sickle upon the earth, "and the earth was reaped." (Rev. 14 : 14, 16.) But one side of the judgment is here depicted, the gathering of the pious, like ripened wheat, into the kingdom. The judgment of the wicked is afterward described under the figure of the gathering and treading out of grapes, and here Christ does not appear as participating, but only angels (14 : 16-20). Nevertheless, we find it afterward declared without any ambiguity that He, i.e., the King of all kings and Lord of all lords, who comes "riding upon the white horse, who is called Faithful and True," who "doth judge and make war with righteousness," whose "name is called The Word of God," "treadeth the winepress of the fierceness of the wrath of God, the Almighty." The description in 14 : 16ff. is laconic. We are left to understand, without special explanation, that the angel coming out from the temple and gathering the clusters of the vine of the earth performs his task by the command of Christ.

III. "To judge the quick and the dead"—not only those who are living when the Lord shall appear, but also those who are dead—not only single individuals among the dead and the living, but all in either state. The judgment will embrace the whole human race. If the eternal God breathed His creative Spirit into the whole universe, and especially into man created in His own image, and did not entirely withdraw it even after the fall, and if He planned redemption as a general renewal, embracing the whole earth, a new Creation which should bring heaven and earth into harmony with one another, and in which a divine race of men should live and move to His honor in perfect holiness—then the separation and sifting resulting in and through the Judg-

ment must necessarily be also universal in scope. How inimitable are the delineations of the judgment of the world by the Lord of hosts given already in the Old Testament, as, for example, in Isa. 2 : 11ff.: "Jehovah alone shall be exalted in that day. For there shall be a day of Jehovah of hosts upon all that is proud and haughty, and upon all that is lifted up; and it shall be brought low; and upon all the cedars of Lebanon, that are high and lifted up, and upon all the oaks of Bashan, and upon all the high mountains, and upon all the hills that are lifted up, and upon every lofty tower, and upon every fortified wall, and upon all the ships of Tarshish, and upon all pleasant imagery. And the loftiness of man shall be bowed down, and the haughtiness of men shall be brought low; and Jehovah alone shall be exalted in that day. And the idols shall utterly pass away. . . . Cease ye from man, whose breath is in his nostrils; for wherein is he to be accounted of?" By the side of this we place the vision of Rev. 6 : 12ff.: "And I saw when he (the Lamb) opened the sixth seal, and there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the whole moon became as blood. . . . And the kings of the earth, and the princes, and the chief captains, and the rich, and the strong, and every bondman and freeman hid themselves in the caves and in the rocks of the mountains; and they say to the mountains and to the rocks, Fall on us and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: for the great day of their wrath is come; and who is able to stand?" He whose eyes are as a flame of fire will find and bring to light all men and all things. . . .

We note again with admiration the comprehensive brevity and conciseness of our Creed in the expression,

"The quick and the dead."* There is not even a reference here to the fact that a judgment of both the living and the dead cannot take place until the latter shall have been recalled to a state of bodily life. In other words, the resurrection of the dead must precede the Judgment. And a reward of the deeds done in the body can, according to the Christian faith, be given only to a man who is alive in the body. In view of this, we can appreciate the well-known saying of Paul, "If the dead are not raised, let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die." From this it follows also that the Creed speaks only of a judgment affecting men. That the angels are also to be summoned to judgment is never stated in the Scriptures. We read, indeed, in one passage of Paul, "Know ye not that we shall judge angels?" (1 Cor. 6 : 3.) But the word "judge" is here, no doubt, used in the wider sense—exercise authority, rule—as in the preceding verse, "Know ye not that the saints shall judge the world?", or as in the words of Jesus to the apostles, "When the Son of man shall sit upon the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel" (Matt. 19 :28), with which may be compared Dan. 7 : 22: "Until the ancient of days came, and judgment was given to the saints of the Most High, and the time came when the saints possessed the kingdom."

The Creed does not even indicate the nature of the test to be applied; it is silent as to the verdict to be expected and its execution, and various other phases of the Judgment. As it always confines itself to the statement of facts, so here the stupendous fact of the Judg-

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* Acts 10 : 42; Rom. 14 : 9; 2 Tim. 4 : 1; 1 Peter 4 : 5. Compare also Rev. 11 : 18; 14 : 13; 20 : 5, 12.

ment is placed in the foreground, like a mighty towering rock of granite, the image of which shall be imprinted upon the hearts and consciences of those who thus confess their faith. It must be left to the believer, who at his baptism was required to repeat the Apostles' Creed, or a similar one (and in no case was the mention of the Judgment lacking), as the confession of his own faith, to infer that the Judge, whose absolutely necessary mediation he acknowledged in the Creed at his entrance into the church, would regulate the final Judgment by the same test which He applied to the hearts of men in His preaching when upon earth, i.e., whether there were good fruits which could receive the approbation of the Lord or whether the life-tree of the individual had borne poor and evil fruits. Evil thoughts and purposes (1 Cor. 4 : 5) shall be brought to light; account must be rendered for every idle word spoken, and every evil word shall be cast into the furnace of the divine holiness and burned; or, rather, the man whose life has produced such evil fruits, because he must be in his innermost heart and nature an evil man, shall be given over to destruction. On the other hand, he who out of the good treasure of his heart has brought forth good thoughts and praiseworthy words and deeds will receive the inheritance of eternal life. He has been, or rather he has become, like a good tree, and the transformation of his character can be explained only by the fact that the same Lord who has now become the Judge had previously by His powerful renewing grace transplanted him from the barren shore of the Dead Sea into the fruitful fields of Eden and Sharon. Thus, in the last analysis, everything depends upon the relation to Him, the Mediator of salvation. Faith in Him saves, both now and hereafter. No doubt the Philippian jailer, when he cried, "Sirs, what

must I do to be saved?", was thinking of the future Judgment with its terrors and its unrelenting, fearful punishment. In the earthquake and in the miraculous escape of his prisoners from the stocks and chains, he, doubtless partially instructed in Christian truth by the missionary preaching of Paul, certainly like the centurion at the cross, saw lightning flashes of the Last Judgment. And when Paul replies, "Believe on the Lord Jesus and thou shalt be saved, thou and thy house," he, too, had the Judgment of the Last Day in view. He who here on earth lays hold upon salvation will escape that Judgment, i.e., will escape from the condemnation then to be pronounced. Jesus can therefore say, as John reports (3 : 17), that "God sent not his Son into the world to judge the world; but that the world should be saved through him," and that "He that believeth on him is not judged: he that believeth not hath been judged already, because he hath not believed on the name of the only begotten Son of God." With this we should associate the words (5 : 24) : "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word and believeth him that sent me, hath eternal life, and cometh not into judgment, but hath passed out of death into life."

Even believers, it is true, whose spiritual state is pleasing to God and whose works will be found to stand the test, will not in every particular avoid the Judgment. The lord who had taken a journey comes again and makes a reckoning with his servants—not only with the evil servant, but also with those who are found faithful. "He that judgeth me is the Lord," writes Paul to the Corinthians, i.e., on the day when He comes, in contrast to a "day of man" when the Corinthians should place the character and work of their preachers in the scales of their criticism, He will judge His servants from no other

point of view than that of their fidelity as stewards. In a sublime portraiture, the seer of Revelation describes the Last Judgment (20 : 12ff.): "I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne; and books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of the things which were written in the books, according to their works. . . . And if any was not found written in the book of life, he was cast into the lake of fire."

It was also required that in the oral instruction of candidates for reception to the early Church there should be a more precise description of the method of the Judgment and the rewards and penalties to follow. Here young believers must have heard, what was the universal view of the teachings of Scripture, that, while there was for all the same fundamental reward of saving grace, there should yet be various degrees in the verdict—that many would by a very narrow margin, "so as by fire," have a part in salvation and blessedness, and that the punishment of the condemned should be with few or many stripes. It may be further noted that the Church, in perfect harmony with utterances of both the Old and the New Testaments, painted the Judgment scene in right bold colors and did not hesitate to arouse and terrify dull and sleeping consciences by presenting the inexorable severity and rigor of the alternative: Either saved or lost; eternally blessed or eternally miserable; joy in the presence of the Lord and with Him, or unspeakable woe in the companionship of the devil and his angels.

It is only necessary to glance at the oldest literary remains preserved in the Church outside of the New Testament canon, in order to find abundant confirmation of this. Hermas—at the close of the first century—sees the Lord of the tower, seen by him in a vision, approach

the tower and touch every stone with a staff, to see whether it can stand the test.* Every stone represents a Christian, but not all are by any means such as will endure the test of the Judgment. "Behold the future Judgment," he cries to the luxurious and hardhearted rich man. Those who in the end fall away from the living God and do not afterward manifest true repentance are like those who fall into the eternal fire and are burned. When the magistrate threatened Polycarp—about sixty years later than Hermas—that if he did not fear the wild beasts, he would end his life with fire, the brave and pious old man replied: "Thou threatenest me with a fire that burns only for a time and is soon put out again. For thou knowest nothing of the fire of the future judgment and eternal punishment which is reserved for ungodly men." The oldest "Apologist" whose writings have been preserved to us, Aristides, the philosopher—about A.D. 138—warns the Emperor Hadrian, or rather M. Antonius Pius, at the close of his Apology: "May all who have not known God anticipate the terrible judgment which will come upon the whole human race through Jesus Christ." And Justin, in his first Apology, not much later, writes: "If you, despite the fact that we pray for you and openly proclaim everything, do not concern yourselves in the least about the matter, that will not injure us at all, since we believe, or rather, are fully convinced, that everyone, according as his deeds have been, shall make atonement through the eternal fire and render an account according to the measure of the talents received from God." Justin also, in his second Apology, relates in a striking way that a noble woman of high rank, converted from a licentious life to Christianity and a

* Parable IX : 6. 1-3.

pious life, remonstrated earnestly with her heathen and dissolute husband, assuring him that a punishment in eternal fire awaits those who against reason and righteousness lead a wicked life.

Oh! how harsh such language sounds to our tender sensibility and taste—so much so that nothing is longer to be said in our pulpits or taught in our schools about the future Judgment. For it has already come to this, that not only is Jesus ruled out of the doctrine of the future judgment (which is said to belong to the province of God, not of Jesus), but God Himself and His Judgment are banished from the faith of the people and reduced to a figment of the imagination. Beware how far you go with this breaking down of the thought of a coming Judgment! Or, do you imagine that it will be sufficient to say that the moral order of the world requires a chaste and honorable life, integrity, truthfulness toward all and every virtue? I believe that wherever the idea of a real final judgment is cast aside or even blunted, the strongest support of chastity and honor and veracity is removed. Paul did not address to a Felix a Stoical tirade upon the order of nature and the world, nor a lecture upon our duties toward our fellow-men and our own bodies; but he set before his eyes the requirements of a holy and righteous God, and preached to him of the future Judgment. And this preaching gripped his heart and conscience.

But how is this? Where then is Jesus Christ, the Saviour of the world, the Helper of the needy, the Friend of human souls? Oh, He still remains, and always upon the field prosecuting His mission, even when conducting the judgment on the Last Day! He will not reject the upright soul, nor repulse those who fervently long for salvation. He will have compassion upon

all the weak. God has given over the Judgment to Him, because He is the Son of man; and just because He is such—because He has become partaker of our flesh and blood—He can and will have pity upon our frailties. To the upright and pious of every class the announcement, "From thence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead," has not only a startling effect, but they are thereby reminded of the words of the psalm, "Rejoice with trembling!" and admonished to seek the Lord of grace while yet there is time. According to the ancient legend, this clause was offered by the apostle Matthew as his contribution to the construction of the Creed. Matthew had been a publican and sinner, but he had heard from the lips of Jesus: "I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." Without this comfort, the thought of the Judgment Day would be utterly unendurable. But now that it is inseparably connected with the person of Jesus Christ the Mediator, we can sing as in one breath:

"Day of judgment—day of wonders,
Hark, the trumpet's awful sound!"

and

"See the Judge our nature wearing,
Clothed in majesty divine!
Ye who long for His appearing
Then shall say, 'This God is mine!'" *

* These lines are represented in the original by stanzas of the German hymns, "Er kommt zum Weltgerichte," and "Wie soll ich dich empfangen."

CHAPTER X

I Believe in the Holy Ghost

By Dr. P. Bachmann

PROFESSOR OF SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY AND NEW TESTAMENT EXEGESIS AT ERLANGEN

I. How did the confession of faith in the Holy Spirit come to have a place in the primitive Creed of the Church of Christ? In this, as in other particulars, the Creed is a faithful expression of the truth preached by the apostles, a necessary echo of it from the heart of the youthful Church in its formative period. Peter in his sermon at Pentecost had at once proclaimed the arrival of the age of the Spirit, whom God was to pour out upon all flesh; acknowledged the exalted Christ as the possessor and dispenser of the Holy Spirit; pronounced the miraculous operation of the Holy Spirit upon the company of believers a result of the exaltation of Jesus, and promised the gift of the Spirit to all who receive baptism in the name of Jesus Christ. In the miraculous powers which descended from above upon him and his associates, the apostle, therefore, recognized a pledge and fruit of the supremacy of his Lord in heaven. His assured faith in Christ was confirmed and completed by his experience of the Spirit. With the preaching of Christ there was thus from the very beginning combined a directing of the thoughts of the hearers to the Holy Spirit and the promise of the Spirit. We may think of Peter, the other apostles and Paul, the primitive missionaries, as heralds

passing through the land and the surrounding nations with the clear conception of their mission: "We preach to you Christ and His supremacy; we bring to you the Holy Spirit." With the full consciousness of this mission, Paul taught the Christians in Galatia to regard the new experience in their own hearts, the new powers with which they were endowed, and their awakening consciousness of divine sonship as the work of the Holy Spirit who had been imparted to them. (Gal. 3 : 2ff.; 4 : 6.) He exhorted them no less to allow this Spirit to become a source of a new and holy life in inward liberty, in love, in victory over the lusts of the flesh, and the impelling power enabling them to sow the seed for a glorious harvest in eternity (5 : 5 to 6 : 10). He sought to inspire the brethren at Corinth with the conviction that the Spirit of God dwelt in them if and because they remain fixed upon the one foundation that is laid, Jesus Christ. (1 Cor. 3 : 16; 6 : 19.) When they were inclined to pride themselves upon the abundance of their peculiar and extraordinary gifts and even vied with one another in the use of them, he taught them that the Spirit works even in the simplest confession of faith in Christ, and that the best, most fruitful and most glorious proof of the possession of the Spirit is the love that beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things (12 : 3; 13 : 1ff.). He sought to make it clear to them that the glory of Christ lies precisely in this, that He brings the Spirit, the life-giving, liberating Spirit, and not a dead law with its fixed literal requirements. (2 Cor. 3 : 4-18.) This congregation and all the churches into whose hearts and ears he had been permitted to pour the Gospel lay before his vision as an epistle which Christ had written upon the hearts of men by the Spirit (3 : 3). In his Epistle to the Romans, Paul describes the fellow-

ship of believers with God as resulting from a genuine acceptance of Jesus Christ. But he also represents it as due to the fact that God makes Jesus Christ the Mediator of the Spirit, and through this Spirit begets a life of genuine godly disposition, joyous confidence in God and victorious conquest of sin. (Rom. 8 : 1-17.) Because ye have heard in faith the word of truth from Christ, ye have been sealed with the promised Holy Spirit. It is *one* Spirit who among you and everywhere builds together Jews and Gentiles into a temple of God in Christ. Ye are in this Spirit under obligation to preserve unity amid all the diversity of gifts and powers, and by the power of this Spirit to mold your lives anew in clear contrast with the sins of the past—with these great truths and lofty and earnest exhortations Paul illuminates and explains to the Ephesians their standing in Christ, their duty to learn from Him, and their life in Him. (Eph. 1 : 13f.; 2 : 11-22; 4 : 3ff.; 22f., 30.) Paul feels himself and his spiritual son, Timothy, supported in the work of preserving the sound doctrine by the one Holy Spirit dwelling in them, the Spirit of power and love and discipline." (2 Tim. 1 : 14, 7.) Like Paul, Peter bears clear testimony to the Spirit in his epistles. He teaches the Christians of Asia that the Spirit of God has laid hold upon them with His sanctifying power, because they have subjected themselves to Christ and received the sprinkling through His blood. (1 Peter 1 : 2.) He desires to see the Christian Church a Spirit-filled house, and he represents the ascended Lord, in whom they believe, though they see Him not, and whom unseen they love, as Himself living in the Spirit (2 : 5; 3 : 18). In the midst of the reproach which they bear for Christ's sake, they are to be sustained by the lofty consciousness that even now, and just on account of their afflictions, the

Spirit of God's glory descends upon them (4 : 14). John, too, teaches his readers to find in their possession of the Spirit a pledge that their fellowship with God and their participation in the salvation wrought through the Son are inviolable living realities. (1 John 3 : 24; 4 : 13.) Being anointed with this Spirit qualifies for the discriminating between Christian truth and Christ-denying falsehoods (2 : 19ff., 27). Even the Holy Spirit Himself is proved to be genuine by the testimony which He bears to Christ manifest in the flesh (4 : 2f.).

Thus in all the preaching of the apostles the heralding of Christ and of the Spirit go hand in hand—not only side by side, but most intimately bound together. Both are presented together, interlaced and inseparably combined. The belief of the apostolic Church in Christ was always at the same time a belief in the Holy Spirit.

This may be thought remarkable, and, perhaps, even unintelligible. For if Christ and the Spirit are nothing more than organs of the living God, mediators of His dominion over men and His self-impartation to men, what, it may be asked, is then the purpose of this twofold, double mediatorship? Certainly the existence of a mediatorship does not of itself in this sphere indicate a limitation of the immediate exercise of the power of God. This is perfectly clear even in the Old Testament. The Old Testament moves entirely and joyously in the full consciousness of the immediate sovereignty of God. All the organs of which God there avails Himself are expressions of this immediacy and not limitations of it. The more imperiously the supreme sovereignty of God is displayed, the more fully and overmasteringly does it impart itself to the mediating agents selected and employed by it. It is not, therefore, the existence of a mediatorship which in itself makes the teaching of Scrip-

tures so remarkable and apparently unintelligible.

But does it not almost seem as though there were, even in the Old Testament, a certain concurrence between the two organs of divine mediation recognized in the teachings of the primitive Church and its leaders? The Old Testament certainly looks forward to the future for the full display of the divine sovereignty. It utters this expectation in sublime prophecies and promises. But have we not some prophecies in which the salvation of God in the future is made to flow entirely from the Messiah, and others in which it is presented as a fruit of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit? The hopes of the future, for example, in Isa. 9 : 6, are fixed entirely upon the coming Messiah: "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace." On the other hand, the eyes are directed to the Spirit alone in the passage in Ezekiel (36 : 26f.) which culminates in the promise: "A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep mine ordinances and do them." Does not the one class of promises cross the path of the other, just as, in the faith of the New Testament Church, the confidence in Christ alone and the assurance of the possession of the Holy Spirit appear to encroach upon one another?

Let us first inquire how it came to pass that the confession of faith in the Spirit stands side by side with that of faith in Christ. Is it a result of any theoretical ideas, or in obedience to a doctrinal tradition? No; it was the utterance of immediate conviction of real facts; a heart-

felt and enthusiastic belief. These early believers were joyfully conscious of the possession of the Spirit. They directly experienced His presence with creative activity in the extraordinary wealth of miraculous gifts and powers outpoured upon the churches and upon many individuals simultaneously. Miracles were performed, prophecies were uttered, secret things were revealed, timid lips were opened as by a compulsion from above, mighty forces of inward renewal transformed the souls of men, an inner sense of liberty and happiness irradiated the lives of multitudes. This is the Spirit whom Christ has given us! With this joyously-proclaimed conviction, they made the glorious facts their own. Thus the public confession of the Spirit sprang spontaneously from their lips because they recognized Him as a reality in the life of the congregation and in the movements and life within their own souls. But this reality was thus glorious, not only in itself, but through its association with the promises of Jesus, whom they honored and worshiped as Lord over all, in whom they recognized with joy and comfort the Eternal Father Himself and His saving love.

Promises of the Spirit given by Jesus? Modern critical theology enters a protest. Nevertheless, we shall study them, starting with the fact that our Lord, after His resurrection, authorized and instructed His disciples to evangelize the whole world with His teachings, and that He, in connection with this, appointed baptism to be administered in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. The question may indeed be asked, when considering this solemn, profound and impressive formula, whether the reference here to the Holy Spirit is not a surprise in view of the usual teachings of Jesus. In these, we know with certainty that He announced that the kingdom of God had come and de-

clared Himself the Messiah in this kingdom. These two thoughts so dominate and fill the teaching of Jesus that at the first glance and in a superficial analysis we may fail to note any marked interest in the presence or agency of the Spirit. But how far astray would be such a conclusion! In the conversation with Nicodemus, Jesus made entrance to the kingdom of God dependent upon the new birth by the Spirit, and already with open, listening ear caught something of the sound of the mysterious wind of the regenerating Spirit. In His last discourses with His disciples, He foretold the coming of the Spirit of truth and announced Him as the mediating agent through whom they would receive inward clearness of vision and power, and through whom the Church would be enabled to maintain itself and make progress in the world. (John 14 : 26; 15 : 26; 16 : 7ff.) These express declarations are found, it is true, only in the Gospel of John. But they are firmly anchored also in the discourses of Jesus recorded in the other Gospels. They speak, indeed, very seldom of the Spirit; but when they do so, it is always in the most reverent and significant way. When Jesus drives out devils, He is enabled to do so by the power of the Spirit of God which works effectually in Him. If the power of the Spirit of God is thus active in His works, this is claimed as a pledge and decisive evidence that the kingdom of God has begun on earth. (Matt. 12 : 28.) Blasphemy against the Holy Ghost is, therefore, denounced as the unpardonable sin. (Matt. 12 : 31; Mark 3 : 28f.) But, on the other hand, the peculiar and supreme blessing which the Father in heaven is ready to bestow upon those who ask in prayer is this same Holy Spirit. (Compare Luke 11 : 13 with Matt. 7 : 11.) In the gift of the Spirit also, according to these witnesses, is manifested the sovereign power of

God in its peculiar energy, in its blessing and saving efficacy, in its strict judicial severity, and its unapproachable holiness. If Jesus thus thought and spoke, His conception of His own inner life must have been that it was His calling to impart to the people of God just this distinctive gift of the Spirit by offering Himself to them as their Lord and Master, and, therefore, that He was Himself in His own inner being and personal life filled with the Spirit of God, and just in consequence of this capable of accomplishing His Messianic work. And we have evidence that He did thus regard Himself. Luke reports that Jesus in the synagogue at Capernaum applied to Himself the words of Isaiah's prophecy: "The Spirit of the Lord Jehovah is upon me; because Jehovah hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; to proclaim the year of Jehovah's favor." He, therefore, always regarded Himself as the possessor, bearer and imparter of the Spirit, and drew the energy for all His activities from the Spirit. It was thus not the outburst of a sudden impulse, but the expression and result of an inward conviction inspiring His whole life, when Jesus, in establishing the ordinance of baptism after His resurrection, instructs that it be administered in His own name and in that of the Father and of the Holy Spirit. Jesus had claimed for Himself the possession of the Holy Spirit and promised the Spirit to His followers as the most distinctive gift of the divine sovereignty—and, *therefore,* in the Creed of the primitive Church we find the confession of the Holy Ghost co-ordinated with the confession of the Father and the Son.

But we must go yet a few steps further back if we

would thoroughly grasp the basis for this co-ordination. The first step leads us out to John the Baptist in the wilderness. As he baptized Jesus with water, God the Lord anointed His Son, born of the Spirit, with the Spirit of Messianic authority. Before this occurred, however, John had prophesied: "He that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: He shall baptize you in the Holy Spirit and in fire." (Matt. 3 : 11.) Did John in uttering these words refer to the baptism which Christ was to institute? By no means. He referred to the entire lifework of the Messiah. Everything which He should accomplish in word and deed would have in view the one supreme purpose, that the guiding, testing, purifying, consuming, inflaming power of the Spirit of God should be felt by all the people and by the whole world. But in thus hoping and prophesying, however, John was resting entirely upon the foundation of the Old Testament—of the life and hopes of the Old Testament Church. In times of the saddest collapse, whether of the personal or of the national life, what is the cry which bursts forth from the distressed hearts of the people? "Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me." (Ps. 51 : 10.) There bursts forth the prayer for the Spirit, the painful realization that the sins of the people are making God their enemy. (Isa. 63 : 10), the hope that there may be a reviving of the dead nation by the breath of the Spirit of God. (Ezek. 37.) This nation had its prophets, who were a visible pledge that God was seeking to establish and maintain His covenant and fellowship with them. This He did, however, by qualifying them by His Spirit to proclaim His will; and the proclamation of His will, it is true, culminated in the promise of the Messianic King. But it culminated also in the promise of an era of the

Spirit: "I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of grace and of supplication." (Zech. 12 : 10.*)

To what conclusion are we thus led? We see clearly, at least, that the confession of faith in the Holy Spirit is not a theological dogma invented by the primitive Christian Church in order to round out its theory of the Trinity. We find this confession in the Old Testament in the form of prayer and expectation, and, still further, as a testimonial of an actual possession then already enjoyed. But its chief support is found in the testimony, the life, and the promises of Jesus. Without this acknowledgment of the Spirit, the Creed of the primitive Church would have dropped out of organic connection with all the great truths proclaimed by Jesus, with the testimony of the Old Testament Church, with the divine self-revelation, and with the displays of the merciful rule of God in both the old and the new covenants. The clear line of progressive revelation would have been broken and the harmonious course of redemptive history interrupted, if the confession of faith in the Spirit had not found a place in the primitive Creed and precisely the place which has been assigned to it. So firmly is this truth embedded in the structure of the entire Confession in whose light we seek to walk.

But what shall we say of the dual and duplex nature thus ascribed to the mediatorship between God and man, to which reference has been made? Some light has, we trust, already been thrown upon this problem. Faith in the Spirit, it has been seen, was in the primitive Church inseparably united with faith in Christ because Christ Himself had lived in the Spirit when on earth, and after

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* Compare Isa. 32 : 15; 11 : 32; Ezek. 39 : 29; Joel 2 : 28f.

His departure imparted the Spirit to His disciples. The mission of Christ and His ministry culminated and attained their end, according to the view of these early believers, in the bestowal of the Holy Spirit. God gives Christ, and through Him the Holy Spirit. Christ and the Spirit are not two unconnected entities standing side by side. The gift of the Spirit is rather the evidence and goal of the mediatorial reign of Jesus Christ. The question then becomes simply: What is the real aim of the mediatorial reign of Christ, since it thus culminates in the impartation of the Holy Spirit? Religion is not chiefly and in itself a knowledge of God, but the knowledge of God affecting us. What truths, in this sense religious, had the primitive Church in mind when it confessed, "I believe in the Holy Spirit"?

The primitive Church was in position, from actual observation as well as from Scriptural testimony, to know something of the power and gifts of the Spirit. The Scriptures presented to her the Spirit of God as the power which transformed the empty primeval chaos into a scene of marvelous life and fruitfulness. They represented Him as the breath of life, which elevated man into the likeness to God and endowed him with power to subdue the world. It was this Spirit, according to the Scriptures, who filled Israel's heroes and saints, kings and seers, when they wrought mighty works of God in the world. From Him proceeded the miracle of prophecy—conscious of its divine source, profound in its faith, and clear in its vision of the future—bearing its testimony to the moral government of God, His law and His grace.* Upon Him rests the hope of the sinful and the weak,

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*Numb. 11 : 25; Deut. 34 : 9; Jud. 14 : 6, 19; 1 Sam. 10 : 6; 16 : 13; Isa. 11 : 2; 42 : 1.

when all confidence in their own righteousness and strength is shattered.* He alone is able to restore to the people their forfeited and ruined life and renew them from sin and guilt to holiness and peace and fullness of life and strength.† In all these utterances, greatly varied as they were, the Scriptures bore to the primitive Church always the same testimony, i.e.: The Spirit is the Power of God, which conveys the will, the power, the secrets, the truth, the life of God into the inmost soul of the creature, of man the sinner called to salvation, and there gives them energizing, vitalizing power. The Spirit is not a being of intermediate character, in whom the glory and power of God are somewhat modified in order that men may without danger approach nearer to Him. No! the Spirit is God Himself in His immediate working upon the heart of man, upon the sinful, in the world, for the gracious impartation of Himself for life and salvation. But that which the Old Testament Scriptures thus taught the early believers in regard to the Spirit, they found abundantly confirmed by their own observation and experience. They had observed the Spirit of God effecting in Jesus their Lord the power of working miracles; prophetic acquaintance with the secret counsels of God; a life of holiness and love and truth, of profound and complete fellowship with God; an indwelling of the Father in Him with a power and clearness that irradiated His whole life with a mighty spiritual energy. And they had had the personal experience that the Lord who had ascended to heaven through the Spirit drew near to them with His word, His truth, His life; that He, although seated at the right hand of the Father, yet filled their

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* Ps. 51 : 10; 143 : 10.

† Isa. 32 : 15; Zech. 12 : 10; Ezek. 36 : 25ff.

own souls with His assurances, His impulses, His powers; that He who had departed from them yet laid direct hold upon their hearts with regenerating spiritual power. All of this, together with the testimony of the Scriptures, was for them wrought into one great harmonious conception and found living utterance in their confession: I believe in the Holy Spirit. With their confession of faith in Christ they combined the statement of the great redemptive acts that marked the life of Christ. But with their confession of faith in the Spirit they logically and appropriately combined also the statement of the great effects and blessings which have come to the world through God and Christ: the holy Christian Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body and the life everlasting. The Spirit was for the early Church the Power of God, through which, by God's eternal will and Christ's redemptive work, a fellowship of faith arises in the world; through which the paternal love of God and the grace of Christ are offered to men for their personal participation and become inward possessions of the believers' life. "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ" and "the love of God" find their realization and consummation in the "communion of the Holy Spirit." (2 Cor. 13 : 13.) In this sense are we to understand the declaration of the early Christian confession of faith: "I believe in the Holy Ghost"—truly an utterance full of hope, of all-conquering assurance, of the humble despair of man's own power—an utterance of genuine, living faith.

II. The declaration of faith in the Holy Spirit has maintained its place in the Christian Creed throughout all periods of the Church's history. It remained in force even during the critical interval when the miraculous manifestations of the Spirit gradually diminished in fre-

quency and finally ceased altogether. This required careful thought upon the part of the theologians of the ancient Church, as it compelled them to inquire how faith in the Holy Spirit could be combined with faith in God; how the Spirit was to be discriminated from the Father and the Son within the nature of God, and yet be equal to the Father and the Son; and how the Spirit lives and works within the unity of the divine nature. The essential elements of the answer given are found in the declarations of the Nicene Creed: "And I believe in the Holy Ghost, the Lord and Giver of life, who proceedeth from the Father and the Son, who with the Father and the Son together is worshiped and glorified, who spake by the prophets." Faith in the Spirit became a very peculiar and vital experience to many a pious believer in the Middle Ages, when his soul, burdened by the miseries of the Church and the imperfections of the Christian world, was cheered by the hope of an era of the Spirit, when pure truth, full liberty and perfect love should fill the souls of men; when no Church, no doctrinal requirements, no external work should intrude between the soul and God; and when the Spirit should itself alone and perfectly fill and unite and bless all hearts in the immediate presence of God. This faith of the Creed is found, without a trace of fanaticism but with full and conscious congeniality, in Luther, who, in discussing the third article in his Larger Catechism, says: "This is the force of this article, which must ever continue in operation. For creation is accomplished and redemption is finished. But the Holy Ghost carries on His work without ceasing to the Last Day. And for that purpose He has appointed a congregation upon the earth, by which He speaks and does everything. For He has not yet brought together all His Christian people nor

completed the distribution of forgiveness. Therefore we believe in Him who through the Word daily brings us into the fellowship of this Christian people, and through the same Word and the forgiveness of sins bestows, increases and strengthens faith, in order that when He has accomplished it all and we abide therein, and die to the world and to all evil, He may finally make us perfectly and forever holy; which now we expect in faith through the Word." Theology has frequently, as though wearied by the very fullness of the divine blessings and the profound depths of the divine mysteries, allowed the Spirit of God to escape its notice and substituted for Him the spirit of the animate creation (a "motion created in things," Augsburg Confession); or generalized the Holy Spirit as being the universal spirit of the Christian world (Schleiermacher). It has often done little enough to catch the full inspiration which is inherent in the Creed's confession of the ever-operative Holy Spirit of God and which can be received only in fellowship with Him and from Him. The doctrine of the Spirit was misunderstood when, in some quarters, even up to the most recent times, signs and wonders, speaking with tongues and prophesying were regarded, prayed for, and insisted upon as the surest evidences of the presence of the Spirit. The Spirit appears in an utterly false light when, as often in modern theology, the testimony of the New Testament is interpreted as representing Him to be a kind of supermundane material being, a simple natural force, a magical power, instead of will, light, conscious life, author of the Word. Thus the Creed's article upon the Spirit has had a varied treatment, and, perhaps, its worst experience has been that it has often found a lodgment in the head instead of in the heart, that it has not always been appropriated and experienced as the source and

ground and power of a profound inner confidence, of heroic struggle against evil, and a joyous and effectual activity in the service of Christ. But what is the fate of this article to-day? Do we still regard it as unshaken and impregnable, and has it still for us a real value?

To both questions we reply with a grateful, Yes. That God our Father and Christ our Lord will manifest their interest in us by the sending of the Spirit, is for us who live in the midst of inner perplexities and trials a truth of the highest value. And this value still lies in the same direction in which the primitive Church sought and found it, according to the testimony of the Scriptures. Let us summon a few witnesses. A. von Oettingen says:* "The historical accomplishment of the universal act of atonement, valid for the entire race, would remain for the individual man of the present day an unapproachable, long-past event in the realm of history if God the Holy Spirit did not by His vigorous self-testimony constantly bring Christ into our hearts and convince us of the grace of God. It is absolutely beyond the power of sinful man to introduce himself, as it were, by his own initiative, into the fellowship of Christ and enjoy the benefit of His redeeming work. To produce in the heart of the conscious sinner—whether presumptuous or despairing, the assurance of the forgiving love of God requires a peculiar redemptive act. It is through the self-witnessing of the Holy Spirit, which is personal in its character, that our spirit must be aroused and the new birth into divine sonship effected. This is a miracle of grace." Kahler† argues that the Spirit of God, by His act in applying salvation to the individual, furnishes a substitute

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* Lutherische Dogmatik II. 2, p. 297.

† Wissenchaft der christlichen Lehre, § 442.

for the former earthly presence of the now ascended Christ in an effectual form appropriate to the end in view. "For, on the one hand, the immediate historical activity of a personality confined to a definite place must remain limited, and there must be another agency of communication, if there is to be anything more than a merely posthumous influence. Therefore the Church confesses her faith, not in God, Jesus as the Christ, and the Gospel; but in God the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost. On the other hand, the love of God, being a holy love, can exert its attractive power upon the individual only upon the condition that the reality of this love has been consciously felt through its manifestation in Christ. But even this conscious sense of the love of God is not experienced as long as the sinner merely hears and seeks to understand, but only when he is immediately wrought upon by this attractive power and thus enters into the relationship of an actually reconciled sinner. Accordingly, the inward working of the Spirit in man is the culmination of the reconciliation founded upon the work of Christ, and thus the outpouring of the Spirit is the conclusion of that work." And, finally, Schlatter:* "Through the sending of the Spirit, the grace of God, which calls us to Him and unites us with Him, is implanted in the current of history. The Spirit is the constant manifestation of the presence of God in the course of history. The sending of Christ marks one incident in that manifestation as the act of revelation. But we do not have to look for the gracious work of God only to the past, nor only in the past find ground for certainty in our relationship to God. As the Giver of the Spirit, God has filled our own age and history with His rich gift. Therefore, if we would

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* Das christliche Dogma, p. 367.

bear witness to Christ it is indispensable that we bear witness to the Spirit, for the Spirit is the ever-present evidence of Christ."

The importance of the third article of the Creed, presented in the above citations in dogmatic form, is most directly and instinctively felt by every earnest heart striving for the welfare of the kingdom of God, in view of the present needs of the Church and the unceasing storm and stress of the inner life. Intellectual force and noble purpose are, indeed, enlisted in the service of the Church to-day. There is no lack of men of talent who are devoting themselves, with all that they are and all that they can do, to the advancement of the Church of Christ. Nevertheless, there is much in the present condition of the Church to distress us and fill us with anxiety and fear. Many a cry of alarm arises from earnest hearts, longing for more harmony, more vigorous life, more conquering power, more men of prophetic and apostolic character. We keenly feel that we stand in need of other gifts and powers than men of high natural endowments can call forth from their own hearts and spirits. What we now are and now possess must be fortified, given wings, empowered, indued with higher energy if it is to really ward off the perils threatening the Church. We look about us in society and in the world, seeking to discover in some quarter sources of higher energy. But we see everywhere the same poverty, the same great need. We find ourselves bound down to the sphere of human helplessness and must, with the whole believing Church, so remain unless a new source of power from God shall be opened up, a divine energy which shall be able to reinforce the gifts and powers already existing and call others into being. "I believe in the Holy Ghost!"—and our own separate individual, personal, Christian life? The

idea pervading all the above citations is a correct one. There is need of a divine creative work of the Holy Spirit, if Christ is to be brought near to us from His historical remoteness and His heavenly exaltation and become formed within us as a living and controlling power. But we know and realize only too keenly in our own experience what obstacles our hearts interpose to such a work of the Spirit. We grow up in a Christian community, receive a Christian education under the direction of Christian teachers and the Church. The words of Christ are an authority for us; the teachings of the Gospel stand before us with all the force of sacred tradition. We are thus dependent upon Christ—a dependence which often enough proves to be a wholesome and helpful influence in our lives. But when doubts arise within us, gnawing and devouring and consuming and destroying all our hopes, then there stirs within our souls a sense of a deep want, of painful poverty, and we sigh: Is there then no power that is able, despite my own reasonings and quibblings, to transform the external truth upon which I gaze into a joyous assurance within my own heart? The moral requirements of Christianity impress us deeply by their sublimity. We make earnest efforts to obey the commandments of love to God and to our neighbor. We exercise ourselves in prayer. We take our part in the daily life of the church. We try to follow in the footsteps of Christ. But in many a silent hour we are assailed by the humiliating conviction: Yet all of this in your life is, after all, but a sort of external keeping of a law. All of this falls far short of a living force within, a direct, voluntary movement in joyous liberty. Your Christian life often enough assumes for you the aspect of a dull, distasteful law; whereas the law should long since have been transformed in the freshness of your

renewed life into a direct assurance, and your slavish service glorified into royal liberty and dominion. Perhaps you are able to apprehend and practice Christianity as a law; but do you transform it into a spirit? And we must go yet a step further in our self-examination, even when it leads us to the most profound humiliation. Does it not sometimes happen in our Christian life that the Gospel, which we thought we had so thoroughly accepted, suddenly appears to us as something far away and strange, and that we clearly realize how deep a gap yawns between it and us? It may happen that into the midst of our Christian activities there is injected from within our hearts a spirit of self-seeking and wickedness, and we discover that there is slumbering within us, as under a thin covering, a tremendous opposition to God, a strong disposition to deny and disobey Him. We then clearly realize that one short further step would result in complete surrender and collapse. In such seasons of temptation we look earnestly within. We clearly see that in these alarming experiences there is but revealed what was all along lying concealed in the depths of the soul. We discover thus the obstinate discord of human nature, the disposition of our inmost souls toward God the Lord, and with alarm and ardent longing we utter the heartfelt sigh: Who will deliver me from myself? Who will transform my heart? Who is the regenerating Power for my nature steeped in wickedness? Then, and then only, do we in some fitting measure lay hold upon the comfort, the encouragement, the holy confidence which live, and which may and should live for all, in the confession: "I believe in the Holy Ghost." This, then, ceases to be a mere formula, a doctrine, a tradition. It becomes a precious living and life-giving possession.

But is it also truth? Is it not a dream, the illusion of a more childlike and credulous age, an unproved figment of the imagination? This is the last, but also the most serious question which is forced upon us. What proof have we for the existence and agency of the Holy Spirit? Proofs? Subjective proofs chiefly, the evidence derived from our own inner experience. When we experience that what God has given in Christ becomes spirit and power within us; when we feel with instinctive certainty that this is not our work, because we find in ourselves too strong an opposition to it—then we believe that we are, at least in some measure, experiencing the truth that the holy and sanctifying Spirit is working in the world. But—we believe. Faith, even when it assumes the form of faith in the Holy Spirit, is, in the last analysis, "assurance of things hoped for, a conviction of things not seen." There is no objective, i.e., outwardly compelling evidence for the activity of the Holy Spirit. We refrain from seeking such evidence in the occasional extraordinary and wonderful occurrences in the Christian life; for proofs of this kind are not convincing unless there has been an antecedent faith in the Holy Ghost. Nor do we carefully investigate the incidents of our own inner life to discover whether the good features of it may not be divided into such as might be explained by our natural powers and disposition and such as betray the presence of the Spirit by their extraordinary force, or the strength of the feelings accompanying them, or by their apparent spontaneity. There is only one final and reliable basis for our faith in the Holy Spirit, i.e., the promise of Christ and of the Father. The Father, who gives the kingdom, was the starting-point of the preaching of Jesus; Christ, who is the Son of God, and reigns as Lord, was its center; the Spirit, the Comforter, who

should come, was its conclusion. To this promise we cling when inward trials and storms threaten to engulf us. In its light our own past and present become great, significant and holy, and, therefore, true and complete. For now, when we have appropriated and with simplicity believe Christ's promise of the Spirit, how does not every event of our lives which arrests our attention, stirs our hearts, or illuminates our minds with thoughts of God or Christ become a pledge to us of the Spirit's presence! In the light of our faith in the promised Spirit, every admonition of conscience, every comforting experience, every rising emotion of joyous faith and power to do good, every triumph of love and hope within us, every longing for God and every sensation of blessed union with Him, every prayer welling up from the depths of our hearts, every resolution to walk in sincerity and purity, every clear vision of the truth and the ways of God—all this becomes for us an experiencing of the Spirit, and we feel ourselves favored of God and securely kept because the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of the Father not only greet us from afar, but reveal themselves within us by leading us into and preserving us in the fellowship of the Holy Spirit. It is true, we are even then still conscious of divided powers and discord and shortcomings in our inward nature. But we will neither despair nor tremble. Like Paul, we are sustained by the assurance: "The Lord is the Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. But we all, with unveiled face beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are transformed into the same image from glory to glory, even as from the Lord the Spirit." (2 Cor. 3 : 17, 18.)

"I believe in the Holy Ghost." Spirit-faith is at the present time again making its way with new energy, in

contrast with the matter-faith, or materialism, which for a time held tyrannical sway over the minds of men. But it is a spirit-faith of the most general kind, a faith attaching itself to the human spirit. One is heard proclaiming this faith with the full, clear and uncomforting conviction that the human spirit is the only spirit existing in the universe, and that it can consequently become and accomplish only what it is able by its own powers to become and accomplish. Others proclaim the same doctrine, but seek to modify its comfortless and terrifying aspect by honoring this human spirit with a divine name. We hear of Idealism here and Idealism there—an Idealism of noble endeavor and lofty aims, but yet something utterly and entirely different from that which the Church of Christ believes and confesses and glories in and hopes for when she declares: "I believe in the Holy Ghost."

CHAPTER XI

A Holy Christian Church, the Communion of Saints

By Dr. Wilhelm Walther
professor of church history at rostock

"Dear is to me the holy Maid,—
I never can forget her;
For glorious things of her are said;
Than life I love her better.
So dear and good
That if I should
Afflicted be
It moves not me;
For she my soul will ravish
With constancy and love's pure fire,
And with her bounty lavish
Fulfill my heart's desire."

How difficult it would be for Christians of the present age to feel but a little of the profound, burning, joyous affection for the Church which must have filled the heart of the singer of these words. Indeed, if we did not know from other sources whom Luther meant by the "holy Maid" we would, perhaps, still be casting about for an explanation of the title. But we are told that it is "A hymn of the holy Christian Church." The Church! Who can say to-day that she has taken possession of his heart; that he cannot forget her; that she is his comfort even in the greatest misfortunes? The Church! In many professed Christians the word awakens only a sense of re-

pugnance, if not bitter hostility, and countless numbers are entirely unmoved by it.

Whence this marked difference between the Reformer and the children of the Reformation? Has the Church so greatly changed within these few centuries? Had she in Luther's day none of the "spots and wrinkles" which are now said to deface her and make it impossible to love her warmly? But who does not know how bitterly Luther lamented the condition of the Church in his age! And to anyone at all acquainted with the history of the Church it must at least appear doubtful whether she is really more disfigured to-day than she was then. Why then is it so difficult for us to cherish warm affection for her and to esteem her as highly as did Luther?

There are probably two reasons for this. The Church which Luther loved can no more be found by many. They no longer know what the Church is, But even if this is known, the unhealthy spirit of the age makes it difficult to appreciate her inestimable value.

What is the Church? Luther lamented that this "blind, indistinct word" has been used in the Creed. He would rather have read instead: "I believe that there is a Christian, holy people." And, in fact, the lack of clearness in this word has occasioned an endless amount of confusion. Luther, therefore, in his translation of the New Testament, has always used the word "congregation" (Gemeinde) as the German equivalent of the Greek "ecclesia." But since the name "church" has now been universally adopted, we shall employ it instead of the word "congregation" preferred by Luther.

In the New Testament we first meet with the word "church" as it falls from the lips of Jesus (Matt. 16 : 18), and it is uttered in the same tone of inward fervor and

joyful enthusiasm displayed in Luther's hymn. It was at that supremely important turning-point in the ministry of the Lord when Peter, responding in the name of all the disciples to the question addressed to them by the Master, pronounced the clear, positive and enthusiastic testimony to Jesus as the Messiah and the Son of the living God, and thereby made it manifest that the preceding labor of the Lord in the instruction of His disciples had attained its end. The heart of Jesus is stirred with the profoundest delight by this confession. The foundation has now been laid upon which He can further build: "On this rock will I build my Church." Whether by this "rock" the Saviour meant to designate the faith which Peter thus expressed, or Peter himself, to whom a position of leadership was to be assigned in the work of establishing the Church, it was, even under the latter supposition, not the man "Simon, the son of Jonas," who was meant, but the disciple to whom not flesh and blood, but the Father of Jesus in heaven, had revealed the glorious truth. With this confession of their faith, this little band of men rose above what "men said" of the Son of man, and thus began their separation from all others of the human race. This is to be the distinctive trait of the Church of Christ—it is to be built upon faith in Him, the promised King of the kingdom of heaven, the Son of the living God.

In the following sentence, the Lord reveals the incomparable importance attaching to this His Church. He knows well that the kingdom of Satan will open its gates in order by its great power and guile to destroy this Church, which will be so deadly hostile to its malicious schemes, and hence so bitterly hated. But He knows also that this rampart against the power of the adversary is indispensably necessary for the human race, and, there-

fore, indestructible. "The gates of Hades shall not prevail against it." *

But we dare not understand Jesus as using this word "church" as a mere name—simply a term to designate the entire number of those believing on Him, as we use the terms "animal" or "plant" to embrace a great number of separate objects which have no connection with one another and which are far from constituting in any sense a unity. On the contrary, the Greek word "ecclesia" is equivalent to the Old Testament word "Rahal," the national congregation of Israel, which God desired to be a unit, differentiated and separated from all other peoples on the earth, feeling and proving itself one. Believers in Christ are the nation of the King, Jesus Christ, by their common faith most intimately bound to Him, feeling and proving themselves to be a unit. The same truth is taught in the second passage in which Jesus speaks of the Church, i.e., Matt. 18 : 17. The sinning brother is to be rebuked, if necessary, in the presence of other brothers, and, if need be, in the Church. The individual members of the Church are, therefore, to feel themselves brethren, a family of children of God. They should seek to open the eyes of the erring brother to his sin. If individual brothers cannot succeed in this, then the entire body of brethren, "the Church," should lead the erring one back to the right path.

In what way this shall be done, what rules and regulations are to be observed in the discharge of this duty, Jesus does not indicate at all. For this, no instructions can be given which will be found adapted to all times and

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* Accordingly, the Augsburg Confession declares: "The Christian Church is nothing else than the assembly of all believers." "Also they teach, there must always be and continue one holy Christian Church."

all circumstances. If there be but a real inner union among Christians, if but the spiritual welfare of each lies near to the heart of all, then this brotherly love will, from time to time, find the proper external regulations which are an indispensable necessity in every association of men if there is to be a wholesome influence of one member upon another. The Lord, therefore, prescribes only that which the brotherly love prevailing in His Church demands, i.e., a strong desire to promote the spiritual welfare of the brother and contribute to his salvation—a desire which spares the feelings of the brother as much as possible, and to this end first privately points out to him his wrong—but which also leaves nothing possible undone, and to this end does not spare him the disgrace of having his guilt known, if need be, by others—even by the entire body of brethren. This spirit of genuine brotherly love will recognize the necessity of fixed regulations to be observed in the family circle, and from time to time prescribe the proper forms.

But are they right who would have us read in these words of Jesus a code of instructions as to the proper form of government in the Church? They tell us that He here evidently means, not a summoning together of the whole Church, but only the assembling of the local congregation. By "church" He understands, therefore, the individual congregation. And, in committing to this the decision as to its offending member, He declares the single congregation to be autonomous. The party in Germany which is shouting for a "free Christianity," and yet cannot conceal from itself the fact that the casting aside of all regulations in the congregations would also destroy all cohesion and even imperil the existence of the congregations themselves, has recently adopted the rallying-cry: "Not the Church, but the congregation!"

But the words of Jesus have no bearing whatever upon this question. By the term "church" He does not mean the individual congregation in contradistinction from the entire body of congregations. This is proved by the earlier passage, in which He speaks of all who believe on Him as "my Church." And in the present passage it is left entirely undetermined what is the extent of the circle of brethren which is to endeavor to reclaim the erring brother. As long as the little band of twelve traveling through the land with Jesus constituted "His Church," He meant by the word just that little company. When the number of His followers became separated locally, it was necessary to organize them into individual congregations in order to carry out the instructions of the Lord. When other congregations were also affected by the conduct of the transgressor, they were called upon to assist in the discipline. In cases of necessity, an attempt was made to secure the judgment or action of the entire Church when it appeared that the end sought by Christ could be attained in no other way. The term "church," as used by Christ, had nothing to do with numbers or locality. The smallest circle of believers—though only two or three were assembled in His name—is the Church of Jesus, His people, just as truly as the entire congregation of believers on earth.

To not a few well-meaning Christians the word "church" appears to be especially uncongenial. They prefer to speak of the "kingdom of God." At the mention of the latter their hearts beat more warmly. To labor for this is to them a holy joy. Some have even placed the two conceptions in direct contrast, regarding the kingdom of God as a divine and the Church as a human conception. But those who do so use the word "church" in a sense entirely different from that of Jesus, understanding by it

the external regulations adopted by the Church in various times and places. But this conception stands in direct opposition to the reference of Jesus to "my Church," and to all that He has said in regard to it. And are not all members of the Church of Christ also participants in His kingdom—He their King, and they clinging to Him in faith and subject to Him, while bound together in love and serving one another? The difference between the two conceptions is only that when we speak of the kingdom of God, or of Christ, we have most prominently in mind the King and His dealings with us; when we use the word church, we think, of those who are united by their common faith in Christ and live in union with Him. The kingdom of God comes when Jesus comes to men; the Church is built up when men believe in Him. This formal, but not real difference in the signification of the words makes it very evident why the Lord speaks, not of the kingdom, but of the Church, when designating the faith of men as its foundation. Hence everything in the discourses of Jesus which refers, not to the King, but to the subjects of the kingdom applies to the Church. Of this Church it is said that it springs from the seed of the Word of God; that it shall grow and become a great tree; that it shall diffuse its influence like leaven; that the eyes of the Lord detect the tares among the wheat, although we may be unable to discriminate between the true and the false.

But what shall we say to those who, in their hostility to the word "church," maintain that it was not used by Christ at all, but inserted in His discourses at a later age? We may remind them that Paul in all his epistles freely uses this word as one familiar to all Christians, applying it to the earliest Christian congregation. This apostle was evidently not the first "churchman," as he

has been called by some. He only accepted with soul aglow that which the disciples had received from their Lord, and sought to impress the glorious truth upon the hearts of all whom he could win to the faith. What reverence for the Church and love for it are manifest when he declares himself unworthy to be called an apostle, and the chief of sinners, because he "persecuted the Church of God"! It is just because he had once regarded this company of people as unfit to associate with the rest of mankind and had hated them as a strange and insufferable body intruding upon society, that he can—now that he recognizes them as the people of God and the Church of Christ—so profoundly realize that they are an association incomparable, wonderful, beyond all conception great and precious. Hence, he always looks up with amazement, almost with worship, to this miraculous creation of the Lord, and develops in glowing colors the figurative representations of the Church suggested by the words of Jesus.

Is it not astounding—can it be possible—that in the midst of the great multitude who are "by nature the children of wrath," servants of sin and death, there should be a little flock, the Church of the Lord, which is "sanctified in Christ," "loved by Christ," "all the children of God," "become free from sin and servants of righteousness," who "live unto the Lord and die unto the Lord," and, therefore, "shall also live with Him"! * These characteristics, common to them all and separating them from all others of the human race, bind them together in a union so close that all differences among them vanish, and there is here "neither Jew nor Greek, neither bond

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* Eph. 2 : 3; 1 Cor. 1 : 2; Eph. 5 : 25; Gal. 3 : 26; Rom. 6 : 18; 14 : 8; 6 : 8.

nor free, no male nor female; for ye all are one in Christ Jesus"; all so intimately bound together that they constitute one body, the body of Christ, He the Head and they the members, sharing with one another their joys and sorrows, clinging to one another despite all that seems to separate them, feeling their need of one another, and, therefore, deeply interested in one another and always ready to extend to one another a helping hand.*

At another time, he looks upon the Church as a building, that has no equal upon earth. Its foundation, laid by God Himself, is Jesus Christ. It is constantly growing in breadth and height. It is "a holy temple in the Lord," "a sanctuary of God in the Spirit," so that there is in it an actual fulfillment of the wonderful Old Testament prophecy: "I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people." † Then, again, the Church is for him the virgin bride, led to Christ and married to Him, as completely one with Him as though become His flesh as a wife is one with her husband, belonging to Him so absolutely that He would be deprived of something essential if He had her not. As the head without the body would be no head, so Christ would not be Christ, not the King, if He had no body belonging to Him, if He had no Church. Therefore, He cannot do otherwise than foster and cherish His Church, as a husband, being one flesh with his wife, is not in a position to hate his wife, but rather seeks her welfare as his own, because he is thereby really promoting his own happiness. If it is an unfathomable mystery, and yet an indisputable fact, that a man can in another human being see, love and cherish his own self, much more un-

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* Gal. 3 : 28; 1 Cor. 12 : 12, 27; 21 : 25; Eph. 4 : 16.

† 1 Cor. 3 : 9, 11; Eph. 2 : 21; 2 Cor. 6 : 16.

fathomable is the relation existing between Christ and His Church. "Great is the mystery." * There is something so wonderful about the Church that the apostle himself cannot fathom it, not to speak of representing it in any adequate way to others. But there is also something so glorious and precious about it that he is compelled to speak of it again and again, though with stammering tongue.

Paul does not allow himself to be at all disturbed in his rapturous delight in this Church by the knowledge that it is by no means without spot or wrinkle. The Lord, who is the Saviour of this, His body, has yet much to do to it before He can present it to His Father "holy and without blemish."† Just as little does it affect his reverent admiration of the Church that some persons are counted as belonging to it whom the all-seeing eye of the Lord cannot recognize as members of His body. Just because Paul is well aware that "The Lord knoweth them that are His," but that he himself is not authorized to pass judgment upon the faith of individuals, he applies the name "church" to all congregations which have been gathered by the Gospel and baptism, even though there were serious blemishes upon them and it was certain that not all their members were sound in the faith; as, for example, the congregation at Corinth, which was torn by discord and indifferent to offences against morality which were unheard of even among the heathen, and even the Galatian congregation, which he declares to be in danger of losing Christ.‡ But he who should imagine that these early Christian congregations had, nevertheless, always presented such an aspect of purity that the apostle's heart

* 2 Cor. 11 : 2; Eph. 5 : 31f.; 1, 23; 5 : 29ff.

† Eph. 5 : 27.

‡ 1 Cor. 1 : 2; 3 : 3; 5 : 1; Gal. 1 : 2; 5 : 4.

could rejoice in them must never have read with open eyes the letters addressed to them. Had he done so, he would more probably be found asking how it could be possible that congregations gathered by such an apostle should be so "foolish" and "carnal," and how Paul could, despite their defects, still speak so highly of the Church of his day. The eye of his faith discerns the gold among the dross that still is mingled with it, and perceives the radiant glory of the Church despite the deep shadows that have not yet been dispelled. He fervently longs to behold the Church of Christ, and he therefore finds it.

That other trait of the Church which alienates so many in our day, i.e., that order, and not individual caprice, rules within it, was so far from giving offence to the apostle that he contended for it with all his energy. For God, whose temple the Church is, "is not a God of confusion, but of peace." Love, which, as the greatest of the primary virtues, must determine all things in the Church, and which longs to see the Church edified and warned and comforted, cannot fail to perceive that all such efforts can attain their end in the edification of the congregation only when exerted, not according to individual caprice, but under the guidance of fixed regulations. And this implies not only that the Church dare be built on no other foundation than that already laid, Christ, and, therefore, that no other Gospel dare be preached than that proclaimed by Paul, but also that the various forms of service in the Church, such as teaching, admonishing and ruling, are not to be rendered according to individual taste and judgment, but in accordance with proper regulations.*

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* 1 Cor. 14 : 33; 13 : 1; 14 : 1, 3; 3 : 11; Eph. 2 : 20; Gal. 1 : 8f.; 1 Cor. 14 : 40.

But according to *what* regulations? This must be determined by the love which seeks to serve and bless, according to the peculiar conditions and needs at any time or place. Thus the apostle, in revisiting the congregations which he had previously established, was always careful to see that "elders" were called to preside over them. From the conditions which he observed in these congregations the clear vision of his love perceived that it was necessary for their proper edification that such an ordinance should be established. Relying upon the same brotherly love in the membership of the congregations, he expected them to submit willingly to many regulations, the necessity for which might not be apparent in their own case, but which prevailed in other congregations.* He who would lay greater stress upon such incidental matters than upon the unity and advancement of the Church has not yet caught a glimpse of its essential nature, and it cannot be for him what it was designed to be for all who appreciate its mission upon earth.

Thus all the epistles of the New Testament exalt the Church, although not in such eloquent strain as Paul. None the less is this the case in the years following. It is to be observed, however, that the pious delight in the Church is more and more intermingled with the natural pleasure in outward magnificence. There was an attempt to present the Church in all the beauty and power which are to distinguish it in the eternal consummation. Some looked for an association without unworthy members, a Church glorious in its blinding purity. If the number of its members be indeed very small—so much the more flattering is it to belong to the select company. Others pictured to themselves a Church after the manner

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*Acts 14 : 23; 1 Cor. 11 : 16.

of an earthly kingdom, so magnificent as to impress even the worldly-minded—if possible, swaying its scepter over the whole world. The latter conception carried the day. All emphasis was now laid upon mere outward independence and compactness, and, therefore, upon external ordinances and a uniform constitution. Regulations which were meant to be only auxiliary means for the edification of the congregation, and which might, therefore, be changed from time to time according to circumstances, are now regarded as necessary to salvation, and, therefore, of divine obligation. This external, organized association, which can be clearly and definitely known, was supposed to be the true Church, outside of which there is no salvation.

It was Luther's clear eye of faith which first discovered and taught what the Church really is, namely, the congregation of believers upon the whole earth, whose boundaries no man can mark off because with it are always united some who are not truly members of Christ, but which is, nevertheless, a reality, recognizable by the Word and sacraments of the Lord, because through their administration the life of the believing congregation is manifested and new believers are born. From Luther, too, we have learned again to estimate aright the value of external ordinances in the Church. The Christian, secure in his faith, knows that all things of this kind do not belong to the essence of the Church, that he is in faith "a free Lord over all such things." But when he looks upon them with the eye of love—and where there is no such love there is in reality no true faith—when he longs for the inward and outward advancement of the Church, then he will honor such ordinances as the necessary condition for the promotion of her prosperity and subject himself to them as "a willing servant of all

things," even though he may not himself stand in need of them. It follows that, even though these ordinances may have varied greatly in different times and places, this does not destroy the unity of the true Church. To this it is sufficient, says the Augsburg Confession, to agree in regard to the doctrine of the Gospel and the administration of the sacraments, and it is not necessary that the traditional customs and ceremonies established by men be observed. But, on the other hand, since these have under the guidance of God become historically established, the Christian who loves the Church respects them, always conscious, however, of their human origin, and, therefore, never considering their precise form as obligatory, but always ready and willing to adopt a more perfect regulation if God should point out such or permit it to be established.

The new truth as to the real nature of the Church discovered by Luther made it possible to understand aright the declaration of the most ancient Creed upon this point. In the oldest form of this symbol known to us, we read only the words: "a holy Church." This *sanctam ecclesiam* was enlarged by the two additions, *catholicans* and *sanctorum communionem* (translated by Luther, "the congregation of the saints"). These additions first meet us in the text about A.D. 450 and in Southern Gaul. We do not know when, nor by whom, nor from what source, they were inserted. But in certain confessions older than the Apostles' Creed the words appear. In that of Jerusalem, the Church is designated as "catholic," and in that of the bishop of Nicetas of Remesiana (about A.D. 400) it is described as *sanctorum communio*. Inasmuch as South Gaul was closely associated with the Orient, we may infer that the additional words were already, at the time of their adoption into the Creed, a common pos-

session of the more ancient Church at large. But how are we to understand them?

It is maintained that we dare attach to the separate parts of the Creed no other sense than that in which they were understood at the time when they were adopted. Otherwise, "it will be explained in a way contrary to the original sense, and thus misinterpreted." It is certainly true that a scientific investigation of this memorial of ancient times requires an answer to the question: What was understood by it in those days? But when it comes to be the question whether we can yet employ this symbol as *our* confession of faith, then it is only necessary to determine whether the separate clauses, rightly understood, really express the true faith. Those who framed this confession were not attempting to present their own subjective opinions, but "the faith of the apostles," and if they had at any time discovered that they understood any clause differently from the apostles, they would not have stricken out the clause, but only surrendered their improper understanding of it. Thus, we can use the clause, "I believe in a holy Church," as the expression of our faith, even though at the time when the Creed was formed the idea of an external, hierarchically organized institution may have been already in the minds of the authors; and so with other portions. Our acceptance of the term "catholic," as a designation of the Church, does thus not depend upon the understanding of that term in South Gaul in the fifth century. On the contrary, the question for us is: What did the early Christians originally mean to express by the word?

The Church was first called "catholic" by Ignatius of Antioch (†A.D. 110). He means thereby to describe it as the association embracing all believers, however widely scattered, or, in other words, the Church at large. Poly-

carp of Smyrna (†A.D. 155) had the same conception of the word.* But since at a later day the term was employed as a designation of the orthodox, external ecclesiastical communion, with a distinct and definite constitution, as is so often understood even in our day, Luther, in his German catechism, substituted for it the word "Christian." He thus reproduced the exact original meaning of the term. Wherever Christians are to be found, so far extends the Church.

It is not so clear what was originally meant by the phrase, *"sanctorum communionem."* In the African Church, about the year A.D. 400, and by the great Augustine,† it was used as equivalent to the association, or fellowship, of true saints, the believing Christians, and was, therefore, synonymous with "the Church Universal." So also by Nicetas of Remesiana, who lived at about the same time. Not essentially different was the view of Faustus of Reji (about sixty years later), who is the first author known to us to testify distinctly that the words in question had been inserted in the Creed, and that in the circle of his acquaintance it had never been known in any other form.‡ Luther returned to Augustine's con-

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* Ignatius, ad Smyrn. 8 : 2. Mart. Polyc. 8; compare 5 and 9. In the initial greeting and in chapter 16 the word has the same meaning. When, in the latter passage, it is said that Polycarp is the bishop of the Catholic Church in Smyrna, it is not meant to distinguish this as the orthodox Church from heretical Churches, but that the general Church, which is represented also in Smyrna, has there Polycarp as its bishop,—just as Paul describes by the one word, "church," a separate congregation, or even a coherent part of a separate congregation, and at other times the whole body of Christian believers.

† Augustine. Sermo. 52 : 6 (Bass. V. 369).

‡ When Faustus uses the thought of our fellowship with the saints in glory to refute those "who maintained that we dare

ception of the phrase, and held that it is "nothing else than a gloss, or interpretation, by which it was sought to indicate what the Christian Church is." He understood, therefore, the *"sanctorum communio"* as the union of the saints, the concrete association of believers. He objected to the translation, then already widely prevalent, "communion (Gemeinschaft) of saints," that "no German language speaks or understands thus." To speak in real German, it ought to be, a congregation of the saints, i.e., a congregation in which are none but saints, or, more clearly, a holy congregation." He, therefore, translates it: "The congregation of the saints."

From this it is evident that the Church of Luther does not understand these two words of the Creed in precisely the same sense as the most ancient commentator known to us. And we do not even know how the one who placed them in the Creed himself understood them.

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not hold in honor the ashes of the saints and friends of God," we need not infer that he includes under the term "saints," with whom we stand in fellowship, only the saints in the narrower Roman Catholic sense. He may, like Nicetas, have meant all the "glorified righteous" (Heb. 12 : 23), and from the fact that we are most intimately associated with them drawn the conclusion that we may hold their ashes, especially those of the "blessed martyrs," in honor and "celebrate their memory." He mentions the martyrs only because their remains were actually venerated. If he, when speaking of the "saints," includes a wider circle than that of the martyrs, he may also have had in mind a wider circle than that of the ceremonially venerated saints (in the narrow sense of the word). The view that the word "sanctorum" was originally conceived as a neuter, meaning thus fellowship in the sacred things of the Church, such as the sacraments, needs no refutation. Compare Herzog-Hauck Realencyclopædia, 6, 505, 50ff. We do not meet this idea until the twelfth century, doubtless then arising from a misunderstanding of older explanations of the symbol.

Taking them as they stand, there would be nothing in the way of our thinking, with Nicetas, of the saints who have preceded us into the life beyond. Such is certainly our belief. "Whether we live or die, we are the Lord's"; hence, living or departed, believers are the Lord's, and all are therefore one. But since we also know that the words were taken by an Augustine as synonymous with the true Church on earth, there is nothing whatever to hinder us from thus, with Luther, understanding them.

When, therefore, we, as evangelical Christians, confess our faith in "a holy Christian Church, the congregation of the saints," we have in mind, and with deep inward joy, the fact that there is in this sinful, distracted, lost world a Church of God,—*holy,* because consisting of men who have been sanctified by faith in Jesus Christ,—*Christian,* because it is everywhere where Christ is apprehended in faith, though it be in great weakness; not only in the narrower circle of that ecclesiastical organization with which we are ourselves connected; not only where our dim eyes think that they discern true believers, but even where we can discern manifold imperfections,—*a congregation of the believers,* belonging together despite all diversities of a natural or spiritual kind, a fellowship in which each one influences the others and seeks their welfare, even when bitter strife seems to prevail among them.

With joy and pride I so confess. For I can, with Luther, lifting up my head with joyous confidence, add: "And I also am a part and member of the same, a participant and joint owner of all the good it possesses, brought to it and incorporated into it by the Holy Ghost, in that I have heard and continue to hear the Word of God, which is the means of entrance. For formerly, before we had attained to this, we were entirely the devil's own."

But how can we account for the fact that so many Christians in our day can no longer thus confess with joy and pride? We may note three principal reasons:

First. Many Christians do not know at all what they are saying when they speak of the Church. When they hear the word, they think only of ecclesiastical boards—"brutal consistories," as they were called in the days of Rationalism—and of men entrusted with the preaching office, of churchly ordinances and regulations. It would be otherwise incomprehensible how "the Church" and "the associations" (Gemeinschaften) are not seldom spoken of as opponents, or rivals. If anyone should be convinced that the Church of God is not being properly or sufficiently edified in the external ecclesiastical body to which he belongs, and that it is, therefore, necessary for him to strike out upon some new path—perhaps to organize an "association" of those having similar convictions, we may hold that he is entirely mistaken, but his argument would at least have some reasonable meaning. But to place "church" and "association" even side by side, is simple nonsense, unless one is prepared to deny to all friends of the "association" membership in the Church, and thus consign them to the "kingdom of the devil." Those who speak in this foolish way understand by "the Church" some one of the historical and organized ecclesiastical bodies. Can they not perceive the relation in which these bodies stand to the Church in which we believe? They are the circles within which this Church is present, commingled indeed with some who do not truly belong to her. But only because they contain within them this Church, i.e., true believers, can we call them churches, as we call a field in which wheat is growing a wheat field, although there may also be many weeds in it. Hence I must love and honor this external ecclesi-

astical body and seek to promote its welfare, because it contains the Church of the Lord just as certainly as God's Word, which is proclaimed only by the "congregation of the believers" and which alone makes new believers, is heard within it. And if I think that I have discovered new ways which will lead to a more effectual use of the Word, I should, from love to the Church, and therefore from love to the external ecclesiastical body in which the Church is found, make every effort to have these ways thoroughly considered, and, if found good, adopted. If this comes to pass, then an addition will be thus made to the organization of the Church. But just as certainly as the Church cannot advance and flourish without an organization and external regulations, so truly can no arrangements and regulations made by man claim to be alone and forever valid. But he condemns himself who condemns the ecclesiastical body on account of its regulations and yet declares that some other regulations are wholesome and even necessary. And he who professes to love the Church, but does not love but despises and slanders the external ecclesiastical body within which the Church is present and with which God has in His providence connected it, loves something else than the Church of the Lord. But why should he not rather love the Church?

Secondly. Our age suffers from an inordinate subjectivism. Each man wishes, even in the sphere of religion, to be an absolutely independent personality—not to *become,* but to *be* such. Hence he looks upon his whole religious equipment as a self-earned possession. But the great Goethe, who had few equals as an independent spirit, declared that the longer he lived the more clearly he realized how few of his opinions had been independently formed, and how many were merely inherited. It

is the pride of the subjectivist that cannot perceive this to be the case in the realm of our religious knowledge. In reality, we have received the best that we have in the sphere of faith and morality through the Church, through the "congregation of the believing," which has by the labor of centuries prepared it for us and then transmitted it to us. All that we have received from the words and deeds of men to help us in securing our eternal salvation, they could not have possessed or imparted if there had been no congregation of saints—no Church. "The Church," says Luther, in the most genuine humility, "is the mother of us all," who gave us birth from her womb and nourished us with her milk. It is shameful ingratitude to close the eyes to this fact, and even to slander the Church from which we have received the best that we have, as though she had nothing and could be enriched only by us. This ingratitude, born of a deluded subjectivism, makes it impossible for multitudes to love and honor the Church as she deserves.

Thirdly. This disposition to stand alone upon one's own feet, and have only one's self to thank for everything, prevents us also from realizing and receiving the new blessings which we might receive in and from the Church. We think of ourselves as the great oak, standing in self-conscious isolation upon the top of the mountain, defying all storms and in need of neither prop nor shield. Not such was the mighty Luther. To him, the consciousness that he was not standing alone with his faith in a world alienated from God seemed so necessary that he felt compelled to remind himself again and again of the fact that throughout all the centuries, even in the most barren ages, there existed a company of those who, like himself, believed on Jesus Christ. This Luther, whom we regard as so rich in spiritual endowment, and who made

so many others rich, could so little do without the encouragement and help of other Christians that he took refuge again and again to the "congregation of saints." To the writings which they had given to the Church he turned when he longed for fresh revelations of the Holy Spirit. From the members of the Church living about him he humbly drew comfort and strength when his soul was depressed and his courage failing. Thus it was with the man from whom alone we have learned to place a true value upon subjectivism. But with him it was genuine.

Yet who knows but that, if again such times as those in the midst of which Luther lived should come—times when believers shall realize more clearly than to-day the immeasurable gulf between them and others, and in consequence feel themselves orphaned and alone—times when the enmity of the world against them shall not shrink from the most brutal measures of persecution—believers may again fervently long for just that which the Church can be to us and give to us, and, finding this in her, gratefully confess: I believe in a holy Christian Church, the congregation of saints.

CHAPTER XII

The Forgiveness of Sins

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The article upon the forgiveness of sins holds a unique position in the Creed as a whole. It is a small member and is almost unobserved as we repeat the confession. And history shows that it may be passed over very lightly. But when it is passed over lightly, or even regarded as merely a single article among others of the series, the Creed is not what it should be, not an evangelical confession of faith, not a confession of the faith which has by means of the testimony of the apostles found the Father in Christ the Crucified. The Reformation has pointed out to us the way to an evangelical understanding of the Creed, having taught us to read everything in the light of this article. It is for evangelical faith the burning-point of the Creed. "Therefore, it is not enough that I know or believe that Christ was born, suffered, and rose again, unless we also believe this article, which is the final cause of these historical events: I believe that my sins are forgiven. To this article must all the rest be referred, namely, that for Christ's sake, and not for the sake of our merits, our sin is forgiven" (Apol. 2 : 51). We may almost fear to approach this article with our comments, with our theological reflections and attempted elucidation. It leads us into the holy of holies. We cannot speak of the forgiveness of sins in the spirit of the

faith which found utterance in the Reformation and in the Creed without realizing that with the forgiveness of sins the reality of God enters into our life. Where the forgiveness of sins is a living reality, there is God. We must, therefore, at the outset most humbly realize how exalted is the reality which the Creed confesses as compared with our poor words which seek to comprehend and explain it. But, on the other hand, it is the exalting certainty of faith, assuring it of the grace of its God, that it may and must make open confession of that which it believes. Our speech may never be more than a stammering when contrasted with the grandeur of that of which we speak, but we may and should speak, because God has spoken. And His Word, which He speaks to the hearts of men to-day as He did thousands of years ago, which He has proclaimed to the whole world in giving to it His Son, the living Word, in whom is revealed His grace and, with it, life—this Word is: Forgiveness of sins.

But is the forgiveness of sins really such an important thing? Is there not, perhaps, in our use of the phrase something greatly overstrained? Is it not a morbid type of piety, which is always concerned only for the forgiveness of sins? Is it not a healthy tendency of our rigorous modern piety which protests against this and seeks to promote a strong, "manly," vitalized Christianity? Is there not in the preaching of the forgiveness of sins something paralyzing, unnerving, devitalizing—something untrue and, in the long run, positively tending to superficiality? Is not the forgiveness of sins, after all, only *one* thought, one blessing of the Gospel? Is it not really but the condition for the bestowal of the divine blessings, instead of the central blessing itself? Even theologians who are with positive conviction attached to the Gospel as proclaimed by the apostles and reformers

often regard the inclusion of the whole Gospel in the forgiveness of sins as a one-sided theory. They appeal, in support of their contention, to the testimony borne by the apostles and reformers and the wide range of topics which it covers. In addition to the grace of the forgiveness of sins, we here find especially the blessing of the new life depicted in many and varied aspects. We can, therefore, scarcely avoid regarding it as a defect of the Creed that it mentions, in addition to the forgiveness of sins as a blessing of the Gospel, only eternal life, and that, by placing this after the resurrection, it seems to represent it as being essentially only the life of the future. We would not ignore the danger of a one-sided presentation of the Gospel, and hence of the Christian life, by the preaching of the forgiveness of sins. The sedative aspects of the faith may thereby acquire a one-sided prominence. The more they are emphasized, the more must the preaching of forgiveness, which aims to vanquish sin, to make holy love the ruling impulse in human life, but not obliterate the real character of sin as sin, as abnormal and contrary to nature, be in danger of diversion from the path of truthfulness. But where the preaching of forgiveness as the principal thing awakens only the emotional nature without moving the will, where it becomes merely a means of quieting fears in view of the sin which is unavoidable, there the forgiveness of sins is not understood in its real character. If we only accept it as the Gospel offers it, it is actually the Gospel itself. It is this as truly as it is *the* life-question for man, and, at the same time, in its historical manifestation, presents the divine response to this question which furnishes the solution of the life-problem.

I. The forgiveness of sins is certainly not a matter of course. It is the miracle of divine grace by which

God draws men up to Himself, and it, therefore, is "salvation." But in order that it may be thus understood and experienced, it must have first been apprehended as the great life-question. As such, it dominated the educational appointments of the Old Testament. The prescribed sacrifices were designed to keep it alive in the hearts of the people through rites and symbols. To the holy God the sinner dare not draw near as he is. Only divine grace can open to him the way, as it sets before the soul at the same time the holiness of God. In the hard shell of the system of worship lay half concealed and half revealed the mystery in which the backward glance recognizes the preparation for the future which God has in view! It is the task of personal piety to concern itself ever more and more with the great life-question. God has implanted it in the hearts of all men, who are far from Him, but whom He would have draw near to Him. To it bears testimony, even in its wildest aberrations, the belief of the heathen in expiation and sacrifice. Though the conception of God be ever so dim and attenuated, in their impulse to seek expiation and to appease the divinity we may yet trace the deep-seated, secret working of the life-question, which demands an answer. Thus the sacrifices, prompted by fear of the gods, the expressions of a wild longing for expiation and freedom from guilt, such as we find also in the mystery-religions of the New Testament age, receive their thrilling significance. But the unique character of the religion of Israel is to be seen especially in the fact that the forgiveness of sins here, and that in a peculiar way, becomes the life-question. If we may, as Koeberle's splendid work has shown, consider the Old Testament religious development under the title, Sin and Grace, this simply means that that development was dominated by the question of the

forgiveness of sin. Where this question has laid deep hold upon the heart, it conducts man into the presence of the living God; but it also, pointing upward to this same God who by His revelation forces it upon the conscience, carries its own answer with it in assured anticipation. Belief in the forgiveness of sins becomes in the religion of revelation the very heart of the knowledge of God. "Keeping lovingkindness for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin; and that will by no means clear the guilty." (Ex. 34 : 7.) "Who forgiveth (forgave) all thine iniquities . . . who crowneth thee with lovingkindness and tender mercies." (Ps. 103 : 3f.) "But there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared." (Ps. 130 : 4.) Similarly, we may trace back the conception of the forgiveness of sins to the very heart of the prophetic promises. It is foretold that men shall have the forgiveness of their sins; and this means that they shall have salvation, that they shall know God, and that He will truly be the God of His people. This is the "new covenant." (Jer. 31 : 33f.) "And the inhabitants shall not say, I am sick: the people that dwell therein shall be forgiven their iniquity." (Isa. 33 : 24.)* But, with all present assurance, there yet ever remains an outlook for the future. Faith never ceases to be a hopeful and expectant faith. The forgiveness of sins still remains the great life-question. It carries with it an anticipation of the answer, but not yet the full reality of the divine solution of the problem. The development of Jewish piety shows this question influential in the profoundest features of the religious life. Even although it may become to a large extent superficial and

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* Compare also: Isa. 1 : 18; 43 : 25; 44 : 22; Jer. 33 : 8; Micah 7 : 18; Zech. 3 : 9; 13 : 1; Dan. 9 : 24.

be smothered under Pharisaic legal righteousness, Greek-Jewish Gnosticism, or (not the least) the vain conceit of the chosen nation, we are not without impressive evidence how it maintained its hold upon the hearts of the people.*

And God sees to it that this hope does not perish. He imparts new life to it by giving the answer. That answer is Jesus Christ. John the Baptist becomes the herald of His advent by preaching repentance. This means that, by fixing the gaze upon the Judge, he drives anew the problem of forgiveness deep into the consciences of his hearers. He assures them that those who accept his stronger Successor as the solution and fulfillment of the life-problem shall be enabled to grasp its full significance. We have a number of declarations from the lips of Jesus giving assurance of the forgiveness of sins. (Mark 2 : 5; Luke 7 : 47.) We know that at the approach of His death, He established the new divine ordinance in which the forgiveness of sins is the controlling thought. But we are in His case not dependent upon single utterances. His Gospel, as a whole, is the forgiveness of sins—the sin-forgiving grace of God. The modern expounder of religious history who regards the primitive Church as already immersed in mythological ideas and who finds in Paul an acute "orientalizing" of the Gospel is compelled to see the Gospel of Christ shining through all the myths and legends, all the ancient formal piety, as the Gospel of the forgiveness of sins.†

The preaching of Jesus is comprised in the thought of the forgiveness of sins. He proclaims the divine Judge

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* Compare Dan. 9 and Ezra 3.

† Compare Bousset, Kyrios Christo, 1913, pp. 136, 174, 222, 364.

and His holy will, which requires genuine earnestness and unconditional determination in the conflict with sin and in obedience to His commandments. He Himself bows beneath the divine demands and judgment. But He, at the same time, announces the divine Judge as the God who fulfills His promises, the loving Father. He teaches that in the words and works of the Son faith may recognize the merciful purpose of God to save the sinner. Thus the preaching of John the Baptist is adopted and carried farther, and thus its profound truthfulness is vindicated. The thought of forgiveness enables us to understand the preaching of repentance. The God who is the Judge and who announces His grace, this is the God who forgives our sins. He manifests His grace by sending the call to repentance before the terrible "day of the Lord," the revelation of His wrath, shall come. He who bows beneath the summons in penitent faith catches a glimpse of the fulfillment of the promise. In this way we may perceive the unity of the preaching of Jesus. But this grace, which places the sinner before the throne of judgment in order to reveal to him its own fullness of blessing, is sin-forgiving grace, or the grace of the holy God.* Hence, when Jesus promises the forgiveness of sins, we recognize it as only the personal appropriation of His gospel.

But this personal appropriation leads us still farther.

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*It will not be urged in objection to this statement of the substance of the preaching of Jesus that He Himself does not use the word "grace." The word indeed is missing. We embrace in the term the substance, the reality, of which we are here speaking. The apostolic delineation of the person of Jesus (compare John 1 : 14, 17) has given us the word. The only question is whether the substance and reality are here. And this we surely may confidently claim.

Jesus not only bears testimony to the gracious, sin-forgiving will of God in His sermons and awakens faith by His saving acts, but He brings the forgiveness of sins in His *person.* This may be plainly seen in the history of the "woman who was a sinner." She *has* the forgiveness of her sins before the Lord expressly promises it to her. Her love proves this. How can she be sure of her forgiveness? She apprehends it in the person of the Lord. The inexorable preacher of repentance, who remorselessly tears the mask from the face of hyprocrisy and yet cultivates the society of publicans and sinners, the prophet of the holy will of God, the Judge who yet seeks the lost—is Himself the offer of forgiveness for the "lost," whose hearts are yet open for the entrance of such love. In Him the sinner-seeking, i.e., forgiving, grace of God enters into their life. Thus Jesus has Himself pictured His association with such, in contrast with the Pharisaic contempt, in the parable of the Lost Son, which is really the Gospel in the Gospel. The third evangelist has especially dwelt upon this feature of the sinner-seeking love in his portrayal of Jesus and His preaching, as in the case of Zacchæus. But it is really a fundamental feature. According to Mark (2 : 17), Jesus announces that He knows that He has been sent to the sick and sinful, and not to the healthy and righteous. The parable of the Pharisee and the publican (Luke 18 : 9ff.) shows us how man should approach God. It accords fully with the ideal of the piety of the oppressed and heavy-laden which pervades the earlier portion of the Sermon on the Mount. To bring men to this attitude toward God is the aim of the preaching of judgment. To the same end, the forgiveness of sins is to be made the central burden in prayer (Matt. 6 : 12, 14; 18 : 23ff.) This attitude is the condition precedent for the under-

standing and reception of the grace of God as it is offered to us in the Son.

Jesus was the offer of God's sin-forgiving grace in His whole life—in His words, His works, His person. But what He thus was, He became fully by the termination of His life. Thus the deep-seated unsusceptibility which He was compelled to face was made to contribute to the fulfillment of the divine plan. In this the Son recognizes the will of the Father, who, in this way accomplishes His purpose of salvation. For it is the work of God that He gave His Son to death for the reconciliation of the world. But this death is at the same time the work of sin, and thus the appalling evidence of that which separates God and man. Thus it lays the life-question of the forgiveness of sins with its whole weight upon the conscience. In doing so, it casts also the clearest light upon the sinner-seeking, sin-bearing love which is the fundamental characteristic of His whole life—the love which in devoted service offers up its life, inspired by the sure hope of thus attaining what its life had not attained, the salvation of many (Mark 10 : 45) and the establishment of the new divine order. (Matt. 26 : 28.) God by His own deed gives testimony that it is *His* work. Thus the Risen Jesus can again appear before His people in the testimony borne by His disciples. The call to repentance, couched in the monumental deed-language of the cross as the symbol of guilt and judgment, is the new offer of the forgiveness of sins.* Thus the crucified and risen Jesus is felt to be what He is—the bearer of the holy, judicial, life-giving grace of God. The cross becomes the sign of the grace of God, which itself solves the problem of sin. The believer who looks

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* Acts 2 : 38; 3 : 19; 5 : 31; 10 : 43; 13 : 38.

up to the cross is profoundly interested in the life-problem of the forgiveness of sins, but as a solved problem. In the Christ, who always presents Himself as the Crucified, the problem has for him found its solution. Thus he adores the miracle of grace: "for us, for our sins" (1 Thes. 5 : 10; 1 Cor. 15 : 3), the innocent for the guilty (2 Cor. 5 : 21; Rom. 5 : 8), the Son for the reconciliation of the world. (2 Cor. 5 : 19.) This is the consummation, the realization of the grace of God.

It is the task of piety, having first made its own the great life-question, to now fully appropriate the response and solution which God has given. In life and thought, in practice and theology, the Church and every separate member of it must spell out this solution in order more and more profoundly and comprehensively to grasp and understand and experience it. The testimony of the apostles points out to us the way. If we are to be guided by the counting of words, we might, perhaps, here even more readily than in the testimony of Jesus, be inclined to doubt the central significance of this article of the Creed. The attempt has recently been made to prove a wide divergency between the teachings of the Reformers, who speak of a "daily" forgiveness of sins, and that of Paul, which leaves no room whatever for sin in the Christian's life. And yet the whole preaching of Paul was a proclamation of the sin-forgiving grace of God in Christ, the crucified and risen Lord. The divine response to the great life-question, which had affected his life more profoundly, no doubt, than in most men, constitutes the substance of his Gospel. He tells us where this response is to be found. His Gospel is the "word of the cross," i.e., the Crucified One as the living Lord. In Him the sin-forgiving grace of God has become an

actual reality; * in Him, who was crucified and yet ever lives, it comes to life. But if it comes to life, then it is a "new creature." (2 Cor. 5 : 17.) Paul can attest this from his own profound personal experience. He therefore shows, in the second place, that this grace is the source and power of a new life. No one can accept the Crucified and Risen One except by dying and rising with Him. Faith in Christ has the Spirit, and the Spirit is the power of a new life. It is thus made manifest what is the significance of the grace of God which secures the forgiveness of sins, i.e., leads through judgment to deliverance and reconciliation with God. The present points beyond itself to the consummation of faith, which shall unite the believer completely with his Lord and enable the Spirit of life to reach its full attainment.

But this life is found only where there is faith. From the nature of grace it is to be inferred, in the third place, how man receives it. It is not to be earned, for then it would not be grace. The correlate of sin-forgiving grace is faith. Hence, the proposition: "Not by the works of the law, but by faith," is the guiding principle of the doctrine of justification. In this Paul posited his conception of religion, as it is to be derived from the Gospel of the forgiveness of sins. Its assertion is simply this: Salvation can become man's possession only through God's approach to him with His forgiving grace. The testimony of the apostles shows how grace, which is in its very nature sin-forgiving grace, proves itself to be the power of life. And thus is brought out into clear light the divine solution of the life-question of the forgiveness of sins, as this is furnished in Jesus Christ. In

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* Compare 2 Cor. 5 : 19; Rom. 3 : 21ff.; 4 : 7; Col. 1 : 14; 3 : 13; Eph. 1 : 7; 4 : 32.

this way, the forgiveness of sins, properly considered, in its embodiment and in its historical and effectual offer in the Crucified One, appears as in reality the central blessing of the Gospel. At the same time, we cannot fail to observe that the forgiveness of sins committed in the course of the Christian's life is already in the New Testament, as in the injunction to daily prayer to this end, represented as a separate blessing to be constantly appropriated anew.*

The New Testament, we have said, is the guide for the Church, which must constantly appropriate anew the grace of God. Who will deny that piety has often gone astray in despite of its guide? But its very wanderings must make more manifest the significance of the forgiving grace of God. When faith becomes submerged, upon the one hand, in legality and moralism, and then, upon the other hand, in a naturalistic sacramentarianism which can no longer appreciate grace as a personal power, to what shall we ascribe these aberrations if not to the fact that it is no longer understood that in the forgiveness of sins, apprehended by faith, grace is effectually at work, reconciling and imparting life? But in all the perversions of the Church's religion of grace, the preaching of the law and the sacrament of repentance must see to it that the life-question is kept prominent. And the image of crucified Love may then speak to the heart, however defective the mental apprehension.

The Reformation brought together again the question, i.e., the "terrified conscience," and the answer, i.e., Christ. It was convinced that it had thus rediscovered the Gospel. The forgiveness of sins is its germinal principle and its guiding star.† With this all else is secured, for "where

* Compare 1 John 1 : 9; 2 : 1; 3 : 19f.; Heb. 4 : 16; 10 : 18ff.

† For this valuation, compare only Luther II. 717, 33: "There

there is remission of sins, there is also life and salvation." The child of God can now joyously entrust himself in all things to the loving care of his Father. This forgiving grace is to be apprehended in Christ. The word of Christ offers it to us, hence its significance. The sacrament is the seal of this grace. In the struggle of life, in the dangers and false steps incident to our life in this "evil world," forgiveness needs to be daily appropriated anew. In urging this, the leaders of the Reformation laid special stress upon the fact that the forgiving grace of God in Christ has and is a new life. But the controversy with the Papists, who claimed that works must be associated with faith for its completion, and the problem arising from the life of faith itself, i.e., how works are to be regarded, brought it about that justification by faith alone, i.e., the grace of forgiveness, was soon in turn placed in contrast with the new life. The forgiveness of sins thus becomes a special separate blessing. Inasmuch as this blessing is to be ever apprehended anew by believers, it becomes the criterion for the Christian's self-examination. Ritschl, as is well known, has regarded the doctrine of justification as held by the Reformers in this light. In the setting of the doctrine of the forgiveness of sins in contrast with that of the new life there lurks a danger—that of isolation. This isolation was promoted largely by the dogmatic development of the doctrine. This made justification one stage in the way of salvation. In the practical application of the doctrine, the stress was laid upon the "daily" repentance, and the comforting aspects were allowed to come into too great a prominence as contrasted with the stimulating elements

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is no greater sin than not to believe the article, forgiveness of sins."

of the doctrine. That the forgiveness of sins is the central blessing of God to man and the source of a new life, the orthodox teachers did not succeed in making sufficiently plain either in their teaching or—broadly speaking—in the life of the Church. Pietism, in its own way, transformed the inherited doctrine of salvation into practice. But the age was almost totally lacking in an important requisite for the understanding of the Gospel of the forgiveness of sins, i.e., in Theocentricism, an appreciation of the sublimity and solemnity of the conception of God as the Lord. For Rationalism, the life-question vanishes entirely. How utterly lacking in appreciation of the Gospel of forgiving grace even serious thinkers may become under the blinding influence of their moralism, may be observed in no less a writer than Kant.* But the Gospel of the Reformation became again a living force, and, we may fearlessly affirm, it is alive to-day. In old forms and new, the message of the forgiveness of sins in Christ and His blood retains its old quickening energy as an awakening power within and without the "Church," even in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. And for the piety that toils and grows in scope and depth, the forgiveness of sins remains the source of comfort and strength. The article of the forgiveness of sins needs to be worthily interpreted in both directions by the self-contemplation of faith, i.e., dogmatics. The theology of the Church will thus apprehend it as the fundamental article of the Gospel. Our historical review has given us a proper perspective, and we may now, perhaps, venture in brief outline to deduce the significance of the forgiveness of sins from the actual experience of the Christian's life.

* Compare "Die Religion innerhalb der Grenzen der blossen Vernunft." Reclam. p. 124ff.

II. The forgiveness of sins is actually the central blessing of the Gospel. It is the great end sought by that gracious will of God which from its very nature is the source of every blessing. Wherever it is recognized as the great decisive life-question, it presents itself as the preliminary condition for the attainment of salvation. When the Lord and Judge forgives, i.e., when He is gracious, then the happy recipient of His grace is permitted to know Him as the God of life. But the faith to which the forgiveness of sins has become in Christ a reality well knows it to be more than a preliminary condition. Just because forgiveness has become to it a reality, faith experiences what salvation is in its inmost nature. It is communion with the living, personal God, i.e., the God of holy love. The forgiveness of sins is the opening and establishment of communion between the sinner and God. In it, God enters as the holy God of judgment into our life, the God to whom we owe absolute obedience, from whom there can be no concealing of sin and guilt, but who is also Love and who is ready to forgive and to bestow life in communion with Himself. Thus communion becomes an established fact. This is the profoundest element of life. It awakens confidence in the fatherly care of God even in matters of the outward life, presents new tasks and aims, and carries with it the promise of complete life beyond the grave. Therefore, the forgiveness of sins is not one blessing among many, but the central blessing in which all else is included.

This is abundantly confirmed by the fact that wherever forgiveness is appropriated in faith a new moral life springs into being. It is a caricature of the forgiveness of sins, and not the forgiveness which Jesus brought and which the faith of the Reformation finds

in the Crucified—not the forgiveness of which the living God assures us—to which can be justly charged a weakening of the sense of moral responsibility and of the moral energy. The forgiveness of sins, by its very nature, sets before the soul God as the Judge, and sin as at once both sin and guilt. The condemnation of sin is presupposed in forgiveness, or, rather, the condemnation is itself effected and experienced, provided, of course, that the recipient does not regard it as a booty nor as a matter of course, but accepts it in prayerful and penitent faith, i.e., appears before the holy God in order to receive it from Him. Since the forgiveness of sins thus, as an absolutely unmerited gift of the grace of the holy God, becomes the revelation of wonderful Love seeking the sinful and the lost, it at the same time calls into active exercise all the motives of love and gratitude. It thus also assures the effectual working of all impressions of the divine mercy upon the life of the new-born child of God, which is to reflect the life and character of the Father. Forgiveness enables us to experience the profound love of the Father. In order to appreciate the actual effect of forgiveness upon the life, we dare not fail to note that the certainty of pardoning grace is applied to the concrete guilt of the individual person. It thus enters actually and actively into the conflict which marks the individual's life. The personal application is the distinguishing trait of faith in pardoning grace. "Thy sins are forgiven thee." The personal assurance is the strength of the life. This influence is experienced especially in the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. The forgiveness there directly and personally promised releases the soul from the distressing curse of the sin which seems to actually dominate the life and from the oppressing burden of guilt. It banishes fear and de-

spair. It gives a fresh start in life, with all the uplift and encouragement and promises that it carries with it. There is something wonderful about this fresh start. But it is possible to make it again and again without loss of confidence only because forgiveness, apprehended in Christ, bears with it the assurance that the fresh start does not always lead back again into the old ways, i.e., because forgiveness is really the solution of the problem of sin, however far beyond the scenes of the present conflict its final conquest may seem to lie.

But how can forgiveness impart this assurance? It can do so because it introduces a new actual condition, in which the believer is released from the curse of sin and brought into a condition of communion with God. Thus the central thought, when allowed the pre-eminence, aids in the solution of the special problems that arise. The motives which forgiveness calls into action in man's attitude toward God become effective because man through the pardon of his sins assumes upon his part a relation of communion with God. Since he bows before the God who is the holy Judge, and at the same time lays hold upon the grace which seeks the sinner and is ready to forgive, he enters into that relation of a child to the heavenly Father which includes in itself the relation of a servant to God the Lord. But the law and source of this relation of communion is the divine desire for communion, i.e., the holy loving-will of God, which is the will to promote that which is good. Communion with God is the very essence of morality if it be true that the love which inspires the personal life and finds its consummation in self-surrender is the law of morality and the world of voluntary activity its sphere. In the communion with God which he enjoys through pardoning grace, the believer first learns to really know what

"communion" is. The religious relation is itself in a pre-eminent sense a moral relation, because it is the fundamental personal relation. It cannot, indeed, be placed upon a level with the special "ethical" relation of fellowship, i.e., with the relations of men in their mutual associations. As the relation to the "absolute" will—to God, it stands far above all relationships among men. But by its very nature it embraces and interpenetrates all "ethical" relations, which find in it their deepest root. The service of God is service rendered to our brethren. Communion with eternal Love is proved when man becomes its instrument and agent. There exists, therefore, the most intimate organic connection between religion and the moral life. Forgiveness has also a place in the associated life of men. It is the test of the desire for fellowship. The divine forgiveness becomes its strength and its law. (Matt. 18 : 23-35.) He who has been forgiven can and should forgive; for he can and should love in a new way. He thereby proves that the loving-will (of God) has entered his life. In this loving-will, which is the holy loving-will and as such manifests itself especially in forgiveness, he finds the law for his love and the rule for his devoted service—but the rule no less for his "experience" of love as the supreme vitalizing blessing of life, which the Creator has made the law even of the natural life. The divine Love is the rule and source of even the natural relations of life, which it seeks to mould into actual relations of love. But it forms for itself a communion of its own in the fellowship of those who have been reconciled to God through Christ, in the "brotherhood" of the faith. That this brotherhood may upon its part penetrate and purify and sanctify all "natural" fellowship, must be and remain its final aim.

Thus the pardoning grace of God *must* manifest itself

as the power of a new life. But just when the moral life is thus developing, when the forsaking of the old ways becomes the law of the life, when the man in his innermost being is profoundly controlled by the will of holy Love,—then does the forgiveness of sins receive a new and abiding significance as a divine blessing to be constantly appropriated anew, i.e., as the ground of assurance. It does not become less essential with the advance of the Christian life. That advance is in no small degree an advance in the knowledge of sin, and thus necessarily in the appreciation of forgiveness. A knowledge of sin and its condemnation constitutes a fundamental and indispensable condition for a proper understanding of Christ, for the faith which in the Crucified appropriates the grace of God. They stand, therefore, at the beginning of the Christian life. But, on the other hand, it is only this faith, which draws its life from the fountain of grace, which comes to really know how wicked we really are by nature. And the more complete this knowledge becomes, the greater pardoning grace is seen to be. It is precisely the maturest faith that most clearly recognizes pardoning grace as the exclusive ground of salvation. . . . Thus the forgiveness of sins appears, even in the new life itself, as the final ground of confidence. It is precisely the apostles of love who are the heralds of grace. Whoever knew Father Bodelschwingh,* whose life was devoted without reserve to the ministry of mercy, cannot forget how untiringly he proclaimed the great message: "By grace are ye saved."

The continuous, one might almost say increasing, significance of the forgiveness of sins has its profound basis

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* Pastor of the "Colony of Mercy" for epileptics, at Bielefeld, Germany.

in the nature of the religious relationship. In this is revealed the character of the faith. It is in the "reposing in grace" that the passive elements of faith, a factor in the life of faith which cannot be externalized, first find adequate expression. Outside of the sphere of our struggle and toil lies the experience of rest, of peace in retirement, "in the arms and bosom of the Good Shepherd," under the "wings of grace." This aim must be realized even in the midst of the conflict of life, and it finds its realization in the "peace" of the reconciled conscience. Here the longing for peace, the deep religious yearning for harmony and "blessedness," is sanctified and gratified. It is just the Christian life which is constantly advancing that realizes more and more profoundly that only grace can be the ground of peace. But pardoning grace proves to be a protection also against all perversions of this longing for peace and blessedness, because, wherever it is truly appropriated, it opposes the tendency to degenerate into quietism. The forgiveness of sins can never become a mere sedative; it is always also a motive power—whenever and wherever it is a genuine experience. No one can appropriate the divine pardon ever anew without thereby growing constantly in holy love and becoming ever more closely bound to the God who forgives sins,—and this must show itself in the life. But to him who is pressing tirelessly onward in service and conflict the thought of pardoning grace, kept ever freshly before him by his errors, deficiencies and backslidings—the grace which furnishes him strength to journey onward undismayed—brings with it that which assures a true and healthy development of the maturing Christian life, i.e., an ever-deepening consciousness that it is all, all pure grace. And thus the forgiveness of sins, as the "canon" of the religious self-consciousness, points for-

ward also to the time beyond the period of strife, when sin shall be finally abolished in the world of glory. It enables the believer to grow into that inner attitude of the soul toward God which is and remains for time and eternity the secret of the life hidden in God.

Thus the forgiveness of sins stands really at the center of the Christian life in its beginning, growth and consummation. It leads to fellowship with God and maintains the life in proper relation to Him. It is the source of the Christian's life and the regulating principle of his self-consciousness. How can it be this? Because it places man in the presence of God, and in it God enters the life. The forgiveness of sins is the effective self-attestation of the God of holy love Himself, the God of judgment, who desires to be the Father. It is therefore the very heart of the Word of God. But it cannot be this so long as it remains an unsolved life-question. As such, it includes the instinctive recognition of God and the natural longing for communion with Him, but not the certainty and the reality. But it becomes reality in Christ, the inexorable preacher of repentance, who is at the same time the Saviour of sinners—in Him, the Crucified, who is the Everliving One, the bearer of holy, divine love. This is the mystery of faith. For this reason it is a Christ-faith. In Christ, the forgiveness of sins is reality and truth. Therefore He is the reconciling revelation of God. In this way, the forgiveness of sins becomes the interpretation of the second article of the Creed, and, through it, also of the third. Because the Reformation appropriated the pardoning grace of God in the Crucified One, the whole Creed for it took on new life.

Thus the forgiveness of sins is really the central article of evangelical faith. This article inducts into the secret of the Christian life. But it points back as well to

revelation. It binds in union faith and God, revelation and the life of faith. It makes the Creed a confession of faith, and gives it its inner unity. The Reformation recognized this. The article upon the forgiveness of sins enables us to feel that the eternal God of all the worlds, the Lord who controls all things, is our Father. It gives the profoundest interpretation to the whole life of Christ. It shows how God enters into man's life, i.e., that He is experienced as the Holy Spirit. The conception which is held of the forgiveness of sins announces a man's doctrine of God, betrays his Christology, and is plainly seen in his delineation of the Christian life. The forgiveness of sins holds a place above all the reasonings of faith, because it is the secret of revelation, and, therefore, the secret of the Christian life.

But just when we have appraised the forgiveness of sins as the central article of the Creed and the central doctrine of Christianity, we may involuntarily shrink back from the statement. We must *experience* forgiveness. If we treat it as an article of doctrine, we lift it in fact out of its proper sphere. It might be designated as its special mission that it shall, upon the man who transmutes the reality of his life and the reality of God into feelings and ideas, impress this great reality in its rightful claims and demands as a reality. This must in some way be clearly recognized in the elucidation of the doctrine. But it is forced upon our attention above all by the "irrationality" which reaches out far beyond all our thinking and our thoughts. It is the *irrationality of reality* which can, in the last instance, be only experienced. The forgiveness of sins brings to view the irrationality of human life, since it speaks of sin. Sin is the irrational phenomenon of our life, not only theoretically, because the fact of the evil will and severance from God

and the good can in the last instance be apprehended only as a fact, but also practically, because it is the ruin of life, the dissolving of the fellowship, and the denial of the moral reason. Upon the soul of the pious man the irrationality of sin impresses itself especially in the contradiction, that he must regard it as his inherited state and yet as his own act and his own guilt. "Rational" thought explains away the irrationality by speaking of the necessary stage of development and of ignorance. But this solution ignores the reality of sin as the believer experiences it. There is but one way to overcome the difficulty. It is the way of forgiveness. This vanquishes sin as a real thing, and thus proves itself the way of divine wisdom. But this is for the rational thought of the natural man itself a monstrous irrationality, at least in the reality which faith confesses. The wisdom of this method is understood only by him to whom the God who forgives sins becomes a reality. And even for the faith which experiences what sin is and who God is, it remains a miracle—remains the paradox of grace, which surpasses all our thought. Hence Luther could declare that no article of the Creed is harder to believe.* But in its very paradox, in its irrationality, it proclaims its divine reality, in which it becomes the secure basis of life. It leads beyond ideas to life. It places everyone who is willing to consider candidly the reality of his own life face to face with the reality of God, who can alone solve the life-problem. Just on this account, it is the burning-point of the Church's confession of faith, which is a life-faith. Therefore, too, it carries with it the pledge of everlasting life.

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* Compare Erl. Ed., 50, 310f.

CHAPTER XIII

Resurrection of the Flesh and a Life Everlasting

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How many in our day would be better satisfied to have the Creed close simply with the words: I believe in the life everlasting! We would then have avoided the bitter controversy upon the resurrection of the flesh. And would it not be sufficient to confess our belief in the life everlasting? Do not these words themselves embrace everything to which our hope looks forward and for which it longs? Who can deny that "eternal life" may include everything for which the Christian hopes? If only "eternal life" had not become a formula to which the most various meanings are attached! If the hope of everlasting life is to remain a *Christian* hope, it dare not be severed from the hope of resurrection. It is well that the language stands as it does: "I believe in the resurrection and the life everlasting."

But here others will say: If it only stood thus! We do not object to the hope of a resurrection altogether, but to the resurrection of the *flesh.* If it was just simply: resurrection of the *body,* or of the *dead,* as in many other ancient symbols! To that we could accommodate ourselves. That would correspond to the New Testament. Luther would in his day have preferred that, for in his Larger Catechism, as is well known, he did not use the term, "resurrection of the *flesh.*" Really? Does

resurrection of the body, or of the dead, really mean something else than resurrection of the flesh? Does not the New Testament, does not especially Paul, really know anything of a resurrection of the flesh? Has Luther really any substantial objection, based on principle, to the term, resurrection of the flesh? To all these questions we must answer bluntly, No. It was reserved for a later age, particularly our own, to so abuse the word, resurrection, as to make it equivalent to the entirely indefinite phrase: "living on after death." The Sadducees and Pharisees, Jesus and His disciples, the Jews of the Diaspora and the Greeks who differed with them upon this very question, the people of Corinth and the wise men of Athens, Paul and his circle of assistants—these all, when speaking of resurrection, or of an awakening from the dead, whether maintaining or denying it, thought of the fleshly body laid in the grave, not of the soul, nor of the Ego of the man, nor of the body as a form separable from the flesh. It is a matter of perfect indifference whether we say "resurrection" or "resurrection of the body," or "of the flesh," or "of the dead," for the word "resurrection" does not receive its meaning from the associated word. It does not, it is true, assert a precise identity of the buried and the risen body, but it maintains a connection between the buried and the risen corporeality—a connection which is more than an identity or connection of form.

The declaration of Paul, that "flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God," cannot be properly cited against this view; for Paul, too, believes in the Jesus who rose from the grave. No art of exegesis can succeed in proving that in 1 Cor. 15 : 1ff., "hath been raised on the third day," has no connection with the immediately preceding, "He was buried;" and we need only state the

proposition involved in this connection: The buried one was raised, to see plainly that when Paul speaks of resurrection he means the re-animation of the earthly body which has been laid in the grave. And when he further says: "Whether then it be I or they (the first apostles), so we preach, and so ye believed," he bears his testimony as clearly as anyone could desire to the fact that faith in Him who rose from the grave was the common faith of the first Christians. It is equally certain that Paul understands the resurrection of believers, for which he hopes, in no other way than that of Christ (except that Christ arose after three days, whereas believers will not be raised until the Last Day). His whole argument (especially in 1 Cor. 15 : 20, 21) would otherwise fall to pieces. It is perfectly evident, therefore—from the usage of language in the days of the New Testament, from the universal conviction of the resurrection of Jesus from the grave, and from the basing of the hope of the resurrection of believers upon *this* resurrection of Jesus —that the early Christians expect a resurrection by which the believer will be exalted, in the completeness of his being as created, to participation in the eternal kingdom of God. In face of this, it is a matter of no consequence that the formula, "resurrection of the flesh," is not found in the New Testament. It will be remembered, further, that Luke, the traveling companion of Paul, speaks of the flesh of the Risen Lord.*

The appeal to Luther as the crown witness against the resurrection of the flesh is most unfortunate for those who have been bold enough to venture it. The claim, that it is "well known" that Luther rejected the resurrection of the flesh, can be made only by those who are

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* Luke 24 : 39; Acts 2 : 31.

unacquainted with his writings. Anyone who will read carefully the celebrated passage in the Larger Catechism must see that he is led to recommend the formula, "resurrection of the body," or of the "corpse" (!) only for pedagogical reasons, i.e., to make the matter more plain for the common people. Whoever studies Luther any further will soon discover that he speaks often enough of the resurrection of the flesh. No one should attempt, therefore, to array either Paul or Luther against the doctrine of the resurrection of the flesh.

But, on the other hand, it would be an entirely insufficient and unevangelical defence of this article to appeal for its support simply to these authorities. He who really believes in the resurrection of the flesh does so, not because others have so believed, but because he believes in God the Father, in the Risen Jesus, and in the Holy Spirit.

The confession of faith in the resurrection of the flesh has its root in belief in the Father, who is the Creator. It follows from the harmony of the redemptive will and the creative will of God, that the world created by Him has been appointed to be the place for the revelation of His love. To it belongs, as an important member, man—and that, with his entire creatural equipment, including his flesh. It belongs to the very nature of man that he is flesh. It is an utterly unjustified assertion of a rationalistic spiritualism when the nature of man is said to consist of body (form-concept), soul and spirit, whereas the flesh is regarded as an accident. As over against this spiritualism, materialism is right in emphasizing the significance of the material for man. Man, because he is a creature of God, is an organism, not an accidental conglomerate. And when God, by virtue of His love, invites him to a fellowship of life, then *he,* not a part of him,

becomes through this divine love and life a partaker of eternal life. It would be heathen Dualism to affirm of the flesh of man that in it the divine love and life find a limit set to their power of action.

We may recall that Jesus, in arguing with the Pharisees (Mark 12 : 18-27), appeals in support of the hope of resurrection to the fact that God is the God of Abraham. The simple argument is: Because God is the God of Abraham, therefore Abraham will rise from the dead. It is to be observed, first of all, that it is the resurrection from the dead on the Judgment Day which is here spoken of. In that resurrection Abraham will have a part, and then only will it be perfectly manifest what it means for him that God is his God. For the man of God, it belongs to the full conception of life to be risen from the dead (and this in the New Testament sense, as above presented). Regarding the matter from this point of view, we must conclude that death is contrary to the nature of the man of God, and can have power over him only upon the supposition that he has been separated from God.

The confession of the resurrection of the flesh is based, further, upon faith in the Risen Jesus. It is necessary to repeat with emphasis—upon *faith* in the Risen Jesus, in order to avoid the error of basing our hope of the resurrection, through the medium of a syllogism, upon "the best-attested fact of history." Not that we would detract from the force of the purely historical evidence of the resurrection of Jesus. But the personal assurance of the actual reality of the resurrection of Jesus, which is included in faith in the Risen One, is gained in our day in no other way than in the days of Paul, i.e., by an action of God, who, by means of the testimony to the crucified and risen Christ, makes deep

inward impression upon the soul, and thus assures it of the truth of this testimony. Therefore, we *believe* in the Risen Lord. And, with this faith, the objection that the fleshly body of man must necessarily fall into decay loses all its force. He who is with God as the Risen One is the Beginner of the resurrection. To Him applies in a very special sense what He declares of Abraham in proof of the resurrection. Jesus is God. Therefore the astonishing thing is, not that He rises again after His death, but that He dies! The death of Christ upon the cross, whether the emphasis be laid upon the death itself, or upon the fact that the death occurred upon the cross, was in accordance with the will of Jesus, and not the result of a resistless fate. He in whom was God, reconciling the world unto Himself, *could* not remain in death, for God is not a God of the dead. But the Christian, as a believer in Christ, is *in* Christ, and thereby secured against that severance from God the result of which is death. Yes, in the language of Paul, because he is in Christ he is already arisen before he dies. In this bold paradox, which only faith in the Risen Lord can venture to utter, he expresses his absolute assurance that the grace of God in Christ will effect a deliverance and completion of the entire man as God the Creator made him. That this deliverance and completion are to be acomplished in a temporal sequence, cannot shake the assurance of faith.

And, finally, we hope for the resurrection of the flesh because we believe in the Holy Spirit. Faith in the Holy Spirit is faith in God, who maintains an active presence within the world that He has made, never losing Himself in it, and yet ever more completely interpenetrating it. Self-impartation of God, prompted by His free love, is the work of the Holy Spirit. As the work

of *God,* there are no limits to its power of action upon any creature of God, except such as may be set by the creature's own will. It is the "little faith" of rationalism, bordering on heathen Dualism, when it is taught that the action of the Holy Spirit can be exerted only upon the *spirit* of the creature. As certainly as the influence of the Holy Spirit in the believer is not magical, but a personally-exerted influence, so surely is it yet uncompleted as long as the entire nature of the man is not reached and determined by it. The man who is united with God at the very heart of his being will by the quickening influence of the Holy Spirit be brought into fellowship with God in all the aspects of his being, or, in other words, will be led to life. Paul very vividly (especially in Rom. 8) presents this activity of the Holy Spirit in effecting the redemption and glorification of the world. First of all, through the agency of the Holy Spirit and man's obedient response to it, faith is produced, and thus is regained the normal relation of man to God, i.e., God the gracious Giver and man the grateful and sincerely trustful recipient. (1 Cor. 2 : 4; Rom. 1 : 5.) The believer is led and controlled by the Spirit of God. (Rom. 8 : 14.) But now, upon the basis of this presence of the Spirit, it becomes possible for man to do the will of God in appropriate works. The establishment of the normal relation to God makes possible and prepares the way for normal conduct and moral freedom. (Rom. 8 : 4.) Nor is this yet all. The indwelling of the Spirit has an effect also upon the corporeal nature of man. The latter experiences, as a result of this indwelling, the quickening influence of the God who raised up Christ, i.e., made Him alive again. And, finally, the whole Creation of God secures, in connection with the redemption of the body (not from the body) of believers, de-

liverance from the impending fate of dissolution.

The entire Creation of God is a self-consistent organism, in all its parts filled with the life of God. This is the sublime Christian view of the universe, based upon the Christian faith in God—a view in which the resurrection of the flesh appears, not as an alien conception, but as an important and necessary element. It is not the case, therefore, that the confession of faith in the resurrection of the flesh can be surrendered without giving up anything essential. On the contrary, it is just through this confession, and that in the bluntly plain formula of the symbol, "resurrection of the *flesh*," that the Biblical, realistic conception of the universe, opposed alike to the materialistic and the spiritualistic conceptions, finds distinct recognition. The resurrection of the flesh is, therefore, not only a doctrine which was of great importance at one time, when the Church was struggling against Dualistic Gnosticism, but it is just as important to-day and will remain so for all time. That there is room in the discussion of it for the question: How can these things be? is true enough. But to the scepticism which is based upon our inability to imagine how it can be effected, Jesus long ago gave the response which is as timely to-day: "Ye know not the power of God."

"And I believe a life everlasting." The most ancient Roman symbol to which we have access closes with "the resurrection of the flesh." The article confessing belief in a life everlasting was added at a later day. From our discussion of the resurrection, it is evident that nothing essentially new was thus introduced. It may be truthfully said, that it is a natural development of the ancient symbol, that it does not alter the character of the latter.*

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* Harnack in Hauck, Realencyclopædia I., 755.

It follows, that every pantheistic or spiritualistic attempt to volatilize the conception of eternal life is a departure from the sense of the concluding words of the Creed.

We believe in eternal life, also, because we believe in the God who in free love reveals Himself as the Three in One, and not because we are able to prove that the human Ego is indestructible. Much less do we, in proud self-estimate and in defiance of God, make claim to immortality. With humble gratitude we praise the love of God, which, because it is *holy* love and faithfulness, does not finally absorb us into itself, but preserves us in our God-given individuality, and ever leads us on to the realization of our personal being. We know full well that the mere continuance of the individuality of the man of God, assured by the love of God, does not bring into view the real, full meaning of eternal life. The latter receives its full content of meaning ever anew from God upon the ground of the renewed communion with Him, in which we found also the true basis of the resurrection of the flesh. Attempts to portray the "How" of the glorified state for the gratification of pious curiosity are, therefore, aside from the true interests of the faith. The Creed is here marked by the same modest reticence as the New Testament. We will be with the Father; we will be with Christ. This is enough to satisfy our faith. Perhaps the eternal life to which we look forward may be most easily pictured to our minds with the help of a saying of Paul, which is not often thus applied, i.e., "Now abideth faith, hope, love." Faith abides, i.e., the life-union in which the believer now and here already stands with God—and which upon the part of God consists in gracious giving, upon the part of man, in grateful receiving—will, freed from all bounds and limitations, continue forever. This is a more lively conception of the life to

come than the familiar idea of beholding God. The beholding of God will certainly be an experience in eternal life, but we shall behold Him as those who are "of Him, through Him, and to Him." Hope abides, i.e., from God, who is inexhaustibly rich, there pours upon the man of God whose heart is open to receive Him ever new and ever more enrapturing life, and he reaches out for it with a longing that is unquenchable. There is here no ground to fear a "tedious heaven," and no room for the idea of a mere prolonging of existence. And love abides. Filled with divine life and by it endowed with the capacity for loving and giving, the glorified saints live together in a blessed exchange of giving and receiving. Thus eternal life loses the unattractive pallor which has been given it by many attempts to delineate it, and, as it is seen to be the completion of a life which is here already rooted in God, it becomes evident that the Christian believer's profession of faith in eternal life is not an empty guess, not a presumptuous demand, but a genuine faith.

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